UMDA emergency request to suspend proceedings OK'd. » PAGE 2

63-year-old appeals 46-month prison term. » PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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'Govt unlikely to be held liable to Vitug's estate'

MOCHI-MAKERS JAYSON CAMACHO
Paseo de Marianas Promoters, Inc. mochi-makers prepare the mochi for community members and visitors last Saturday during the final weekend of the 2014 Christmas in Marianas at the Paseo de Marianas.
See story on Page 6

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

It is unlikely that the CNMI government would be held liable in a shooting situation like what happened recently in Garapan where Police Officer 1 Christopher S. Santos reportedly fatally shot his former girlfriend before shooting himself, according to veteran lawyer Michael W. Dotts.

Asked by *Saipan Tribune* for expert opinion, Dotts pointed out that the government can sometimes be held liable if a police officer uses "excessive force" in making an arrest.

"Using excessive force is when more than force than necessary is used to arrest a person (or protect the officer or the public) and the person arrested is injured

See GOVT on Page 4

Mother remembers Del Rosario as very respectful, loving person

» Also a member of Guam National Guard, Garapan school teacher aide
» Victim just bought the motorcycle a day before the accident

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Del Rosario

Christopher Henry Manalo Del Rosario, a 21-year-old man who was killed in a motorcycle crash in San Vicente on Christmas Eve, was a member of Guam Army National Guard and served as a teacher aide at Garapan Elementary School.

Velma Manalo Del Rosario in a phone interview yesterday said his son Christopher is a very respectful and a loving person.

"He's very generous. He would give you his last $20 if he had to," the mother said.

She said a week before the accident,

See MOTHER on Page 4

Star Marianas unsatisfied with Guam talks on direct flight access to airport

» Carrier calls on CNMI leaders for help

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

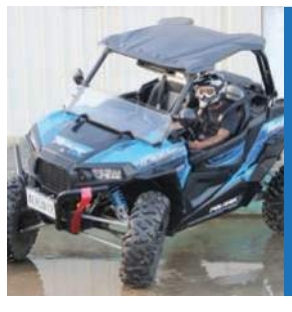
Star Marianas Airlines left discouraged from their most recent talks with the Guam International Airport Authority for self-access to the airport there. GIAA has proposed a facility for use that would be noncompliant with the Federal Aviation Administration, and is less than ideal for travelers and tourists between the CNMI and Guam, according to SMA.

The talks come amid an FAA informal investigation of the Guam airport over alleged violations SMA filed them in September, according to documents obtained by the *Saipan Tribune*.

SMA met with GIAA Property Management division on Guam last Monday. President Shaun Christian, chair Robert Christian, and Rota treasurer Frank

See STAR on Page 4

INSIDE



LOCAL
"Let's Go" tour company held it's grand opening last week in its Lower Base facility.
» PAGE 7

NATION
Thousands of police officers from across the nation packed a church and spilled onto streets Saturday.
» PAGE 16

ASIA
An AirAsia plane with 161 people on board lost contact with ground control on Sunday while flying over the Java Sea.
» PAGE 17

GOT A NEWS TIP?
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Local

LAWSUIT VS WICKLINE

UMDA emergency request to suspend proceedings OK'd

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

U.S. District Court for the NMI designated judge Consuelo B. Marshall has granted the emergency request of the United Micronesia Development Association Inc. to suspend the proceedings in UMDA's lawsuit against its former president and chief execu- H C F J . Wickline.

Wickline

In granting UMDA's motion for emergency stay, Marshall stayed all discovery in the lawsuit for 30 days, until Jan. 16, 2015, to permit UMDA to retain new counsel.

Marshall said her order, however, does not apply to the subject of Wickline's motion to compel, which was set for hearing last Dec. 18 before U.S. District Court for the NMI Magis- H F I . I F . - L

The judge said when new counsel for UMDA appears, the court will set a status conference to reset the discovery completion, settlement conference, motion hearings, pretrial, and trial dates.

UMDA, through counsel Robert T. Torres, requested the court to stay the proceedings and vacate all scheduling deadlines pending resolution of their forthcoming C HC HC - - nedy's granting of Wickline's motion to disqualify counsel and pending UMDA's retention of new trial counsel, if necessary.

. CH - L F I Wickline's motion to disqualify A G K FA C & - JC G F , C . . ICA representing UMDA in its lawsuit against him.

- L G G H K FA CFA F F DF G I - tions of Wickline are in large part related to the current case in which it representsa party adverse to him, the court must G E L H K FA

UMDA, through counsel C H CHF G H H motion for emergency stay. CHF GG I G E I C order has left UMDA without adequate representation, and UMDA cannot retain replacement counsel unless the case is stayed and the imminent discovery deadlines are vacated.

UMDA is suing Wickline "to protect its shareholders from dilution of their interests in the company, to recover substantial damages that UMDA discovered during the course of its investigation, and to stop Wickline from working behind the scene to un- LA G I C F C M

Wickline is also suing UMDA, seeking monetary damages. The court consolidated the cases. The court dismissed UM- G KG H H an amended complaint.

SHEFA reminds students of supporting documents deadline

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Applicants for the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance have until Feb. 28, 2015, to submit supporting documents, according to SHEFA administrator Merissa S. Rasa.

G G H HGH I C check requests from Spring semester students will be forwarded to Department of Finance on Jan. 9, 2015.

Rasa said that SHEFA scholars who recently graduated need to submit a copy of their degree, C HF GFLH graduate form, and Employ- A I 5 F I C CFA F I CFA J F I C form can be downloaded at www.saipanshefa.net.

SHEFA recipients have three months after graduating or non-enrollment to submit the documents for compliance purposes. . HC HCGK C to comply with this.

"As part of the agreement with new graduates, they must submit I FC Ih C FLI CAL I and signed SHEFA graduate form which can be found on the web- GI M G G

"It is a real challenge to track students who do not return to the CNMI and do not provide us their current status. It is important that recipients not forget the agreement that was made when they signed the agreement and LI I F K I M C G

Rasa also said that she hopes previous recipients in default C I HI FC GCH I H L can work with them on a payment plan, on their compliance, even on requesting for a deferment or forbearance if they have IHC AL CLA I

For more information, contact SHEFA at 233-5995 or email at contact@saipanshefa.net.

Tourism Topics

A weekly update from the Marianas Visitors Authority

Tourism is everybody's business.

Saipan Tinian Rota

HAFA ADAI & TIROW WAY

Japan Cross Media Promotion

To attract more Japanese visitors to the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marianas Visitors Authority recently conducted an intensive advertising campaign with eight women's magazines in Japan.

In addition to these eight women's magazines, an intensive advertising campaign was carried out with another four women's magazines and an Asahi newspaper titled "be". A four-page advertorial was featured in AneCan, one of most popular women's monthly magazines to introduce tourist attractions and retail stores in the CNMI. The campaign included information about the present campaign in Asahi Digital "&W".

Last fiscal year over 114,000 Japanese visited the Northern Mariana Islands, comprising 33 percent of total visitor arrivals. The largest percentage came for Pleasure, followed by Dive, Golf, and Company Trip. Most of them worked as office clerks.

63-year-old appeals 46-month prison term

A 63-year-old man who was slapped with a 46-month prison term in federal court for selling methamphetamine or "ice" near the Northern Marianas College is appealing to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Attorney Bruce Berline, court-appointed counsel for Le Xiang Chen, has filed a notice of appeal in the U.S. District Court for the NMI.

In Chen's notice, Berline said they are appealing to the Ninth Circuit to reverse the sentence that Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona imposed last Dec. 4.

Berline did not provide other information in the notice.

In her sentencing order, Manglona said after completing the 46-month prison sentence, Chen will be placed on six years of supervised release. The defendant was given credit for time served.

During the supervised release, the defendant will be turned over to immigration official for removal proceedings.

Chen will be required to perform 100 hours of community work service, pay a $100 court assessment fee, and forfeit to the U.S. government $750 representing the sum of money equal to the proceeds derived from the offense.

At the sentencing, assistant U.S. attorney Ross Naughton recommended a 37-month prison term. Berline recommended a 12-month imprisonment with credit for time served.

Berline

Chen was one of seven persons arrested last February by joint local and federal law enforcements for alleged distribution of "ice."

Last May, Chen pleaded guilty to distribution of "ice" near a school.

According to the plea agreement, on Nov. 8, 2012, Chen sold 2.8 grams of "ice" to a confidential source for the Drug Enforcement Administration in exchange for $750.

The sale took place in Chen's residence in Finasisu, which is within 1,000 feet of NMC.

In defendant's sentencing recommendation, Berline said Chen has consented to removal from the United States.

"Given the charge that Mr. Chen pled to along with his advanced age, Mr. Chen will never be able to return to the United States after he is deported," Berline said.

Berline added that Chen participated in the Tiananmen Square protests, his return to China may lead to severe consequences.

Chen has been in the CNMI since 1998.

Berline said it's Chen's first criminal conviction.

Chen arrived on Saipan in the heyday of the garment industry. He came to Saipan in 1998 to work at the United International Corp., where he worked for four years.

Berline said by chance, Chen rented a small room that was located within a 1,000 yards of NMC.

However, Berline said, despite living and selling "ice" near NMC there is no other connection between Chen and NMC.

Berline said there was no evidence that Chen was selling "ice" to or soliciting the students of the college.

Last May, a mysterious fire burned several apartment units that Chen rented near NMC gymnasium. At the time, Chen was already in prison. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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Am. Samoa woman's tax scam indictment 'tip of iceberg'

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa (The Samoa News)— The federal indictment against an American Samoa woman charged in Alaska for using local residents' tax records in order to get large refunds from the Internal Revenue Service is "only the tip of the iceberg." According to local Treasury Department officials, federal investigators are seeking more information on the illegal practice of American Samoans filing taxes in the U.S. when they did not earn any income in the U.S.

Samoa News reported yesterday that 58-year old Pepe Anetipa was indicted late last month for making false, fictitious, and fraudulent tax claims against the U.S government. She was arrested Dec. 2 in Washington State and arraigned last week at the federal court in Anchorage, Alaska where she pleaded not guilty.

"The federal indictment is just the tip of the iceberg," said former Tax Office manager Melvin Joseph, who is currently the Treasury's tax consultant. It was during Joseph's tenure as Tax Manager when the issue of local residents filing taxes off island first surfaced several years ago.

Meanwhile, the federal prosecutor has declined to comment further on Anetipa's case because some of the issues raised by Samoa News are not in Anetipa's indictment and therefore are not public record.

For example, it's not clear from Anetipa's indictment, if any of the American Samoa residents whose tax records were used by Anetipa, gave the defendant permission to file their taxes with the IRS—or if the tax payers were aware of it all along.

Samoa News also asked if Anetipa shared any of the more than $200,000 in tax refunds with the American Samoa residents whose tax records she used, or did she keep all of that money? Another question arose: if the defendant shared the money with the American Samoa residents involved, did she send a check via Postal Service or was it wire transfer, or direct deposit into a bank account?

"I do know the answers to those questions, but because the information is not in the indictment, it is not public, and I am not permitted to disclose it at this time," was the response yesterday from federal prosecutor Thomas Bradley.

However, Bradley is quoted by Anchorage based KTUU-TV saying that while Anetipa held on to much of the money from the scheme, some of it was paid as kickbacks to the original taxpayers.

"Some of the money was shared with taxpayers she knew," Bradley said. "Sometimes she kept it all and sometimes she kept a part of it."

While it's not clear whether any or all of the taxpayers are criminally culpable in the scheme, Bradley said no further charges are immediately planned beyond those against Anetipa, according to KTUU.

Joseph told Samoa News yesterday that the local tax payers "could very well be the ones suffering" from this scheme of filing in the U.S.— if the tax preparer in the U.S. keeps a large percent, or the entire amount of the tax refund.

He recalled for Samoa News that he and former Gov. Togiola Tulafono over the years have warned residents many times not to file taxes in the U.S. if no income was earned in the U.S., because "it's illegal" but such warnings were ignored. Joseph expects to see more people face federal charges on this same issue.

"Perhaps the main reason that local tax payers didn't heed past warnings was due to the fact that no charges were ever filed by the federal government and therefore people just keep doing the same illegal practice," a former senior government official, who knew of residents who filed taxes in the U.S, told Samoa News yesterday after reading the indictment story.

"Now that this federal indictment is filed and the tax preparer charged, people are nervous and wondering what's coming down the line for them," the former ASG official said yesterday, adding that "justice might be late but justice will be served."

The official, who only spoke with Samoa News if not identified by name, said the government lost out on revenue because of "greedy" tax payers, who filed taxes in the U.S. "knowing very well that this is illegal and should be stopped."

Several weeks after the Lolo Administration took office in January last year, the late Treasurer Dr. Falema'o 'Phil' Pili issued a notice about the considerable amount of local tax payers filing their local income tax returns off island with the IRS mainly to get large tax refunds, through the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, to which American Samoa and other territories are not entitled.

STAR

From Page 1

Atalig were in attendance, along with individuals from GIAA, according SMA.

GIAA or Atalig could not be reached for comment over the holiday weekend. According to SMA, Guam airport wanted to give an update on the proposed "Yellow Cargo Building" for SMA use. A layout of the facility was provided to SMA in October.

However, during the meeting, they learned that the proposed facility currently has no handicap or disabled parking, and very limited parking in general, they said. Also, the soonest it would be available was in April next year.

The only thing availably present was a hallway, according to SMA.

"Currently it's not American with Disabilities Act-compliant," SMA president Shaun Christian told *Saipan Tribune.* He said they were told this would be addressed.

Also, they were told that Guam Customs would not approve of inbound or outbound cargo, according to the president. Despite all of this, Guam airport asked them to approve the plan during their meeting, he said.

But SMA did not believe that "it was in our operational authority to approve or disprove" the plan. They said this would have to be worked out with Guam and the FAA.

The FAA investigation of Guam airport comes through an informal complaint filed by SMA in September.

SMA alleges that the Guam airport has violated FAA grant assurances in using their commuter terminal for "non-aeronautical purposes," among other things. This terminal is reportedly used as a human resource department.

In November, FAA responded to SMA's request for a "formal" investigation of the Guam airport. But SMA was essentially told that a formal complaint would not be considered until an informal process was completed and no resolution reached.

According to FAA, "a person directly and substantially affected by the alleged noncompliance must engage in good faith efforts to resolve the disputed matter informally" with those responsible for the noncompliance, before filing a formal complaint.

This complaint would not be considered until these "good faith efforts" were shown, and unless there was no prospect for the dispute being resolved.

Saipan Tribune asked the FAA's regional office in Honolulu when a decision for the informal process would be expected. An FAA public affairs specialist said they do not have "have a specific timeline for completing our informal investigation."

"We are aware that the GIAA is trying to work out an arrangement with Star Marianas," the specialist said.

But SMA chair Robert Christian, in an interview last Thursday, called GIAA's efforts to work with them "disingenuous."

SMA has for the last two years tried to gain access to the Guam airport. Right now, only charted planes are flown to Guam, with SMA restricted to third party ground handlers for passengers.

This amounts to $40 more one way for passenger tickets, according to SMA. With their recent meeting with GIAA concluded, the SMA chairman said he sees little reason to work Guam again.

He now believes the issue should not be one of "us against Guam airport." He believes the real resolution now lies with Guam and CNMI leadership.

"If Rota's leadership—the Northern Marianas, the governor, and the mayors—are all happy to utilize a hallway with no waiting room, then far be it for us to deny them that."

"Guam airport has no interest whatsoever in putting together a program where there is a nice facility for people who want to visit the Northern Marianas to come to. There is no place to park; no place to wait... The building's noncompliant. Guam's noncompliant. We're not satisfied," he said.

Saipan Tribune, in talking with residents of Rota, heard an expressed desire for direct flights from Rota to Guam, as they believe their economy is dependent on tourism, and direct flights would improve on this.

Rota mayor-elect Efraim Atalig earlier spoke of his intention to work with Guam for direct flights. But the depth of this commitment is yet to be proven.

"It's going to become something [CNMI leaders] are going to have to deal with," chairman Christian said. "Because you really have the economy of both the Commonwealth and Guam that really need to come together and work to getting something that basic—to open up free trade between the territory up there and here."

"It shouldn't be us against the airport," he added. ***(With Thomas Manglona II)***

GOVT

From Page 1

or killed," he said.

The lawyer said the government can be held liable for an officer's use of excessive force because the officer is acting on behalf of the government when making the arrest.

Dotts, however, pointed out that if a police officer is not acting on behalf of the government when the officer uses excessive force, like in a domestic violence with that officer's girlfriend, the government is not liable.

Dotts said if the government knew that the officer had a mental illness or emotional problem that made the officer dangerous, and still provided the officer with a gun, it is probable the government would be held liable.

"If the officer had made threats to his girlfriend and his supervisors knew about the threats and did not act to take away the officer's gun or suspend the officer, then the government could be held liable," Dotts said.

Additionally, the lawyer said, the government could be held liable if the government was negligent in hiring the officer.

Dotts said if the officer had a history of domestic abuse or other violence or mental health problems and the government overlooked that history when the government hired the officer, the government could be held liable, he said.

The lawyer said the government could be held liable if it failed to properly train the officer.

"For example, if the officer used what the officer thought was appropriate force, like a choke hold, because the officer had not been trained not to use a choke hold, and a death or injury resulted, the government could be held liable for failing to train the officer," he said.

Dotts said the cause of action in a lawsuit when a person is killed is called "wrongful death."

Dotts said in a wrongful death action brought against the government, the most that can be recovered by the estate of the person who died is $50,000.

He said if the victim is injured but not killed the victim can recover up to $100,000 from the government.

"If this seems backwards the theory is that a person who is injured will need money for medical care and rehabilitation but a person killed will not need that money. So the relatives of the person who is killed get less than a person who is only injured," Dotts added.

Officer Santos fatally shot Joana Vitug, then himself in the head inside the Mailman and Kara law offices in Garapan where she worked as a paralegal last Dec. 19.

Vitug, 30, and Santos, 24, have one child together. Vitug has three other children.

Police said according to witness accounts, Santos and Vitug engaged in a minor verbal altercation before the on-duty officer fired his DPS-issued firearm at her before firing upon himself.

Both Santos and Vitug were rushed to the Commonwealth Healthcare Center, where they succumbed to their injuries, police said.

MOTHER

From Page 1

her son started giving away his favorite items—expensive cellphone, two cars and others.

"I don't know, but he just gave them away," Velma Del Rosario said.

Del Rosario and his wife, Svetlana Sasamoto, have two children—3 years old and 1 year and 3 months old.

Christopher is the oldest of three children from Henry and Velma Del Rosario.

Del Rosario was killed when he lost control of a black motorcycle he was riding and was thrown against a traffic sign pole along Isa Drive in San Vicente in the afternoon of Dec. 24.

Police said the victim suffered head injury, internal bleeding due to a ruptured spleen, and numerous contusions and lacerations. DPS said a doctor at the Commonwealth Health Center pronounced him dead at 9:19pm as a result of head injury.

Velma Del Rosario said her son had just bought the Honda CBR 600 CC motorcycle on Dec. 23 or a day before the accident.

"My son always wanted a motorcycle. I was the one who stopped him. It's always his dream to have a motorcycle," she said.

Velma Del Rosario said her son was really inexperienced in driving a motorcycle and in fact he was just driving it around his house in Papago.

She said on the day of the accident was the first time he was really driving it away from home.

On that day, Del Rosario was driving home because the family was supposed to have a Christmas Noche Buena at his grandmother's house in Koblerville.

She said her son came from Koblerville and his last stop was in San Antonio, where he talked with his cousin.

Velma Del Rosario said there was no alcohol involved and that his son was not speeding either.

"He doesn't drive and drink," she said, adding that he was also wearing a helmet or protective gear.

The mother said she believes that the accident area is very enchanted or has bad spirits because at least four people already died in that place.

"It's painful to us. It's hard to accept that our son died in the accident," she said.

Velma Del Rosario said she came from work and was in shower when her mother called, telling her that her son's wife, Svetlana, told her that he got into accident.

"So when the ambulance was going down the hill, I was following the ambulance. I was the first one to see my son when they wheeled him into trauma," she said.

Velma Del Rosario said the Department of Public Safety reported that her son died of head injury, and that it was wrong because the doctor told her he died of injuries in the lower extremities and broken shoulder.

Del Rosario, as a member of Guam National Guard, had been training once every month. He's also supposed to get his bachelor's degree next year, the mother said.

The family will announce later the final schedule for the funeral.

Start

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First Day of Class
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NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE
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Christmas in the Marianas concludes with a blast

» Hundreds enjoy Mochitsuki festival » Green Meadow wins Christmas tree decoration

JAYSON CAMACHO

Green Meadow School parents, teachers, students, and other staff smile while posing with their giant $5,000 check after winning the Christmas Tree decoration contest as the 2014 Christmas in the Marianas concluded last Saturday at the Paseo de Marianas.

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Organizers wrapped up the last day of the Christmas in the Marianas by announcing the winners of the float, caroling, and tree decoration contests while hosting the Mochitsuki Festival celebration over the weekend.

Thousands of community members and tourists were wowed by various entertainment from schools and other organizations.

Saipan Awaodori Team kicked off the night with their performances at 5pm and did the opening dance before the Mochitsuki Festival.

After the performances, the Saipan Awaodori then proceeded off stage to start off the Mochitsuki Festival's pounding of the rice.

Both community members and tourists were called up by Paseo de Marianas Promoters, Inc. members to join in pounding the rice for the preparation of the mochi.

Mochi is Japanese rice cake made of mochigome, short-grain japonica glutinous rice. The rice is pounded into paste and molded into the desired shape. In Japan it is traditionally made in a ceremony called mochitsuki.

PDM Promoters president Misako Kamata said that this is their seventh time tailending the Christmas in the Marianas with the Mochitsuki Festival.

"It is a Japanese custom and the mochi is prepared during Christmas before New Year so Japanese people would eat the mocha during New Year. I am very happy with the outcome we had very plenty guests joining us in preparing the mochi," Kamata said.

Aside from the Mochistuki Festival, organizers also announced the winners of the Christmas tree decoration, Christmas float, and Christmas caroling contests.

Green Meadow School was the big winner that night walking with the highest cash prize among the other contests for the Christmas tree decoration. Green Meadow School won with 274 points. Northern Marianas International School won second place, while Koblerville Elementary won third place.

Green Meadow School president Milagros A. Merjilla said that she was happy that their school won the Christmas tree decoration contest.

Merjilla said that the prize money will be used for school projects such as the restroom and the equipment playground.

"The decoration we made it a month before the event. The parents, teachers, and students also contributed in helping and did hard work making the tree," Merjilla.

For the caroling contest, Koblerville Elementary won for the elementary category taking home $1,000. For the middle school, Chacha Oceanview Junior High School won first place with a $1,000, and Saipan Southern High School was first place for the high school category taking home $1,000 as well.

Chacha Oceanview also won the float contest with the prize money of $1,550.

Marianas Visitors Authority community projects manager Martin Duenas said that the last day was a great turnout and overall for all the rest of the Saturdays.

"The performers were great tonight and the guest are enjoying the Mochitsuki Festival. The significance about tonight though is the announcement of the winners," Duenas said.

Duenas said that this year there were more cultural feature displays in the performances and also more schools participated.

"It is gaining more momentum from what it was before," he said.

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TEXAS HOLD'EM POKER
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"Tinian Cup Texas Hold'em Poker Tournament" through Super Satellite
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January 31st a satellite tournament will be held at
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*Satellite tournament entry fee: $100 (must be at least 6 players)
100% of the Satellite pool is redistributed as follows:
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* Terms and conditions apply
*Bet with your head not over it.

‘Let’s Go’ revs up off-road island tours

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

“Let’s Go” tour company held it’s grand opening last week in its Lower Base facility. The company invites everyone to hop on a “wonderful open air” off-road and on-road experience on its Polaris RZR vehicle tours.

The company deploys 10 Polaris RZR units. Six are two-seaters, and the rest are four-seaters. They come with registered safety equipment, harnesses, default speed settings, and plexiglass windshields, for the safety of its customers.

Tan Holdings’ Ivan Quichoco called the RZRs “very powerful and exciting” vehicles. But he added that they want to make its safe for people to enjoy.

They offer three distinct packages—a 1-hour Mt. Tapochau tour, a more extensive “northern” island 2-hour tour, and a 3-hour “southern” tour.

“You feel like you’re driving a car but in a way you’re driving a boat,” said Mike Benavente, tour coordinataor. “To just feel that that outside ambience from the Saipan view is very exciting. The energy you get out of it… It’s just a thrill!”

He said a lot of beautiful sights on the tour include trails that “you have never seen before. “He recommended it for anyone who wants to see “a different world” on Saipan not usually encountered.

DENNIS B. CHAN

“Let’s Go” staff poses with one of their Polaris RZR off-road vehicles.

He added though that safety for customers is the number one priority. “They are in good hands,” he added.

Tour mechanic Roman Tudela, described the vehicles as “road ready.” He helped put together the vehicles’ roof, signals, and bumpers.

The vehicles are geared to not go over 15 miles per hour, he said. The vehicles come with 4-point harnesses, he said, and windshields are Plexiglas and won’t shatter.

Drivers are required to have a driver’s licenses to operate a vehicle, he said.

“We want to keep it safe,” he said. This is just like racing equipment, he added.

“Every day is different,” he said of the tours he’s gone so far. “I used to race motocross, supercross… it’s the same thing. Every day is not the same. It’s always different…the trails that we have up there, I have never seen. I never new about these locations,”

He said the sights are meant to be remembered.

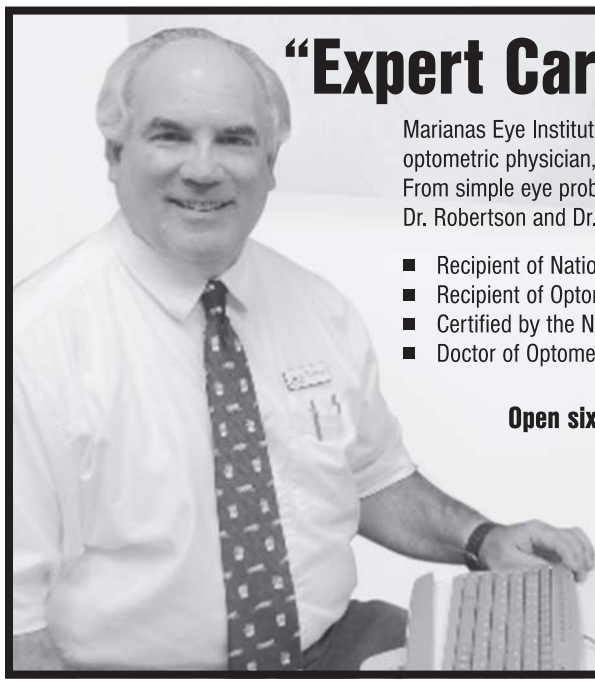
“I have to get it on camera on times,” he added.

Tan Holdings’ Ed Arriola said that “in this world of internet” the tours give tourist something different to experience on island.

“We have to keep up with our tourist demands. We have to give them what they want. And if we don’t…they’ll have to look for another place to visit,” he said.

DENNIS B. CHAN

Roman Tudela of “Let’s Go” shows off the Polaris RZR’s maneuverability.



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RHI celebrates Christmas with inaugural night show

By THOMAS MANGLONA II
CORRESPONDENT

Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High school celebrated Christmas last Tuesday with performances from its 7th through 12th grade students. The event was the inaugural Christmas night edition of the school's annual activities.

"We just thought that we would have more parent participation," Student Council president Taylor Hocog told *Saipan Tribune*. "A lot of the parents work during the day so tonight is where we can really have everyone come together."

School principal Sharlene Manglona expressed her gratitude toward the parents for joining the school in celebrating the holiday season.

Each middle and high school class set up booths, offering face painting and food to students and parents at the event.

Tuesday night's festivities also feature a raffle drawing and classroom-decorating contest.

Junior class president Catherine Manglona said "I am excited that everyone is here."

She added, "Unlike other events, this one is not boring. More families are also coming together tonight and the students seem to be having a good time."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

High school students perform their Christmas song number.

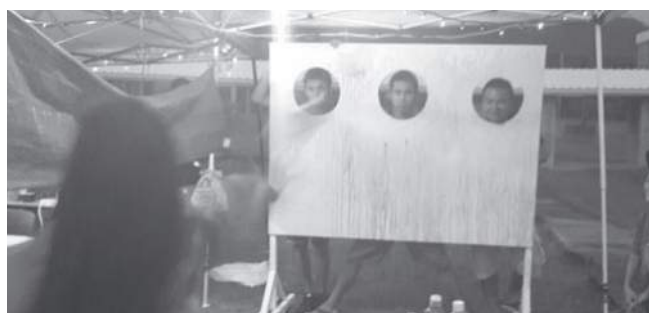
Middle school students dance to Christmas songs as part of the school's Christmas show last Tuesday night.

Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr./Sr. High School teachers Marvin Tamangided and Edwin Orilla pose for a photo at last week's Christmas school celebration.

Senior students pose for a photo at their booth during Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior and Senior High School's Christmas night show.

Board of Education Rota representative Tanya King has her face painted by a student.

Junior students pose for a photo at their photo fundraising booth.



A young girl participates in a sponge throw at the Christmas celebration.

Middle school students perform for dozens of parents on Rota.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

December 29, 2008

Status of Retirement Fund's investments

The ongoing financial turmoil in the global equity and fixed income markets has resulted in the United States' Department of the Treasury taking unprecedented actions over the past few months. By bailing out some of the world's leading financial services firms and taking equity stakes in publicly traded companies, the U.S. Treasury Department has rewritten the rule book on federal intervention in its efforts to stave off a global financial meltdown. The Northern Marianas Islands Retirement Fund has felt the effects of the market turmoil along with other investors in every type of investment including stocks, bonds, mutual funds, money market funds, and the like.

2 in marriage fraud convicted

Two persons were convicted of entering into a fake marriage so one of them will get an immigration status in the CNMI. Ryan Ray Ilo pleaded guilty to one count of immigration fraud, while Zandra Arguelles, also known as Zandra Ilo, pleaded guilty to two counts of document fraud. Superior Court Associate Judge David Wiseman sentenced the 30-year-old Ilo to two years in prison, all suspended, except for two months. Wiseman gave Ilo credit for two days he has already served in jail. The judge directed Ilo to start serving his two-month prison term on Jan. 5, 2009, at the Department of Corrections. Wiseman also required Ilo to perform 50 hours of community service and pay a $500 fine and $25 court assessment fee plus a probation fee. With respect to Arguelles, she was sentenced to two years in prison, all suspended, except for two days. Arguelles was given a two-day credit for the time she had already served in jail.

December 29, 2007

House passes tax on COLA of fed workers

Lawmakers are moving to tax the cost of living allowance paid to federal employees, in a bid to raise revenue to the cash-strapped government. The House of Representatives voted unanimously on Friday to pass House Bill 15-327, to include all COLA payments in wage and salary taxation. House Speaker Oscar M. Babauta, the bill's author, said the measure would make up for some of the government revenue lost from the closure of garment factories on Saipan. He added that the bill would provide for "equality, parity, and fairness" in the taxation system. The bill proposes to impose the tax under the Wage and Salary and Earnings Tax, also known as Chapter 2.

Modern Stationery owner newest victim of burglars

The San Jose home of the owner of Modern Stationery was burglarized on Wednesday, Saipan Tribune learned. The burglar/s managed to get inside the victim's room located on the third floor of the Modern Stationery building through the rooftop. The suspect/s then damaged a portion of the victim's door to get inside the room. The $800 cash that was placed in the living room was reportedly stolen. The victim and her family were off-island when the break-in happened, sources said. Police placed the incident under further investigation. Saipan Tribune gathered that many houses, particularly in the Fina Sisu area, had been burglarized in the past few weeks. No one was arrested yet as of yesterday.

December 29, 2002

Tinian gets $5.6M DOI grant for sewer project

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation's Tinian Office has received some $5.6 million in grant for an island-wide sewer project. CUC Executive Director Lorraine A. Babauta said this is part of the goal to connect all CNMI households and establishments to a sewer line for health and environmental concerns. CUC sewer program manager Edward Babauta is now working with the Tinian office on the project. The project will begin in San Jose, Tinian's main commercial district. Saipan is the only inhabited island in the CNMI that has sewer line connections. Up until now, though, a lot of Saipan villages still lack sewer facilities. Both Tinian and Rota residents continue to use septic tanks for lack of sewer system. Federal authorities discourage the continued use of septic tank due to its impact on the Commonwealth's groundwater.

Rota residents await FEMA center

Rota residents are anxiously waiting for the opening of the disaster recovery center that will be put up by Federal Emergency Management Agency on the island, according to Rep. Daniel O. Quitugua. The center will occupy the newly completed public library building on the island, which was heavily battered by what is believed to be the worst natural disaster to hit the Marianas. Supertyphoon Pongsona, with winds of 180-plus mph, hit the region on Dec. 8.

JAYSON CAMACHO

Saipan Mayor Marian DLG Tudela poses with four homestay students for the cultural exchange program from the International Youth Association of Japan Kokusai Seishonen Kenshu Kyokai group from Tokyo. Also in photo are the students' chaperons and Tudela's executive assistant Yuki Kishimoto and Joan Aquino of the Saipan Mayor's Office.

Saipan mayor happy with homestay students' visit

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

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BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUTS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday Susana Rogopes Macaranas. It takes many special qualities to make a mom like you. A lot of love, kindness, understanding, and a world of loving patience. Happy birthday mom! We love you! From your children.

Robert Tenorio Torres
Attorney at Law
Plata Drive, Whispering Palms (Chalan Kiya)
P.O. Box 503758
Saipan, MP 96950

Tel: (670) 234-7859
Fax. (670) 234-5749

Attorney for Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

BANK OF GUAM, **Plaintiff,** **vs.** **ABRAHAM E. TAISACAN and LYDIA O. TAISACAN,** **Defendants.**	**Civil Action No. 13-0093** **AMENDED NOTICE OF AUCTION and JUDICIAL SALE**

AMENDED NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that under and by virtue of a judgment made and entered in the above titled action on the 27th day of December, 2013, by the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to satisfy the amount found and adjudged due Plaintiff in the above titled action from Defendants, as prescribed in the Order Approving Judicial Sale of Mortgaged Property, the undersigned counsel or his designee will sell at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the 21st day of January, 2015 at 10 a.m., at the Bank of Guam, District II, Songsong Village, Rota, the premises and real estate, lying and being on Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, described in said judgment, to wit:

Lot No. 001 R 22, (formerly known as Lot 10, Block 19), as more particularly described on Drawing/Cadastral Plat No. 001 R 00, the original of which was registered on November 12, 1971 as Document No. 1288 at Land Registry, Saipan.

Terms and Conditions of Sale.

1. Rights and duties of Auctioneer. Consistent with the custom and usage and applicable laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands governing auction sales with reserve, the auctioneer or his designee shall have the following rights and duties in conducting the auction sale:
   a) withdraw the property listed for sale in the public announcement before sale or before a bid for such property is accepted.
   b) to adjourn the sale without notice at any time before any specific property is sold, without incurring any liability whatsoever thereby; and
   c) to reject any and all bids.

2. Bids. Tentative bids may be submitted in advance for any and all of the property listed in the notice. Such bids shall not be binding, except that the highest of such bids will automatically be considered the opening bid for the property. Bids may be entered in person, in writing, or by telephone to Robert T. Torres, Attorney at Law, Plata Drive, Chalan Kiya, P.O. Box 503758, Saipan, MP 96950, Phone: 670-234-7859; Fax: 670-234-5749; Email: rttlaw@pticom.com.

3. Deposit and Payment. A deposit of ten percent (10%) of the purchase price must be paid on the day of the auction sale. The remaining balance will be due within ten days of the auction sale. All payments must be made by cash, cashier's check, or money order. Failure to make payment of the remaining balance within ten days will result in forfeiture by the buyer of the 10% deposit, and any and all of the buyer's rights, title and interest in any of the property will revert to Bank of Guam.

4. Change of Terms. Auctioneer and Bank of Guam reserve the right to change any of the terms of conduct and enforcement of sale by announcement, written or oral, made before the auction sale or at the commencement thereof, and such change or changes, by virtue of this clause shall be binding on any buyer by constructive notice.

5. Inspection and No Warranty. Bidders are cautioned to inspect the title and property. Contact the Law Office of Robert T. Torres for scheduled viewing and inspection times. The interests of the property are being sold "AS IS" and without warranty. Failure to inspect the real property will not constitute a ground for any claim, adjustment or rescission by any buyer.

DATED this 3rd day of December, 2014.

/s/ Robert T. Torres, Auctioneer

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Free flow of Beer, Red & White Wine, American Beer,
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New Year's Eve Special
World Café Restaurant
Seafood & Roast Beef Dinner Buffet
with Ham Carving Station
December 31, 2014, Wednesday
6:00pm ~ 9:30pm
$50 per adult & $25 per children 4 ~ 11 years old
Free flow of Red & White Wine and American Beer
New Year's Day Brunch
World Cafe Restaurant
January 1, 2015, Thursday
11:00am ~ 2:00pm
$35 per adult & $17.50per children 4 ~ 11 years old
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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Blunt words from Pope Francis

In holiday messages at this time of year, the boss usually musters the energy to say nice things to the people who work for him. Even if he's exasperated by the performance of his employees or beset by arrogant bullies on the corporate rungs above him.

That's the generosity of the Christmas spirit, right?

But what if the boss used this holiday interlude not to extol the good but to point out in withering detail his subordinates' personal shortcomings?

And what if that message resonated well beyond the boss' workplace, so that all of us could read his remarks and, gulp, see ourselves in the unflinching mirror that he held aloft?

You may have guessed that we're talking about Pope Francis' extraordinary Christmas message on Monday.

Instead of a traditional message of charity and hope, Francis excoriated the cardinals, bishops and priests who run the Vatican. He accused them of knuckling under to 15 ailments and temptations, including greed, jealousy, hypocrisy, cowardice and, in a memorable phrase, "spiritual Alzheimer's."

He talked about "the terrorism" of gossip, which he labeled a disease that could destroy a reputation "in cold blood." He urged them to be "conscientious objectors" to gossip.

He blasted prelates for vainglory, for amassing wealth and leading double lives that he said could lead to "existential schizophrenia."

The critique "left many of the assembled clerics clearly uncomfortable," the Religious News Service reported. We bet.

Yes, the pope's stinging words were aimed at a specific group of people under his command. And it's tempting to dismiss the workplace lecture of a pope, who, after all, already has a lifetime job and no worries of being fired. He doesn't have to fret about the terrorism of gossip or whether he can afford to put a new iPad under the tree.

But what Francis said invites all of us to take a moment from the dizzying rush of these holidays to take a deep breath and think about the life we lead, the way we treat friends and foes, the things we do to get what we seek.

The pope took aim at "the sickness of considering oneself 'immortal,' 'immune' or 'indispensable.' ... It is the sickness of the rich fool who thinks he will live for all eternity, and of those who transform themselves into masters and believe themselves superior to others, rather than at their service." Those who do think they're immortal, Francis said, should visit a cemetery and gaze on the graves of others who shared that illusion.

He counseled his audience to work as a team and to avoid turning into "procedural machines" through overwork.

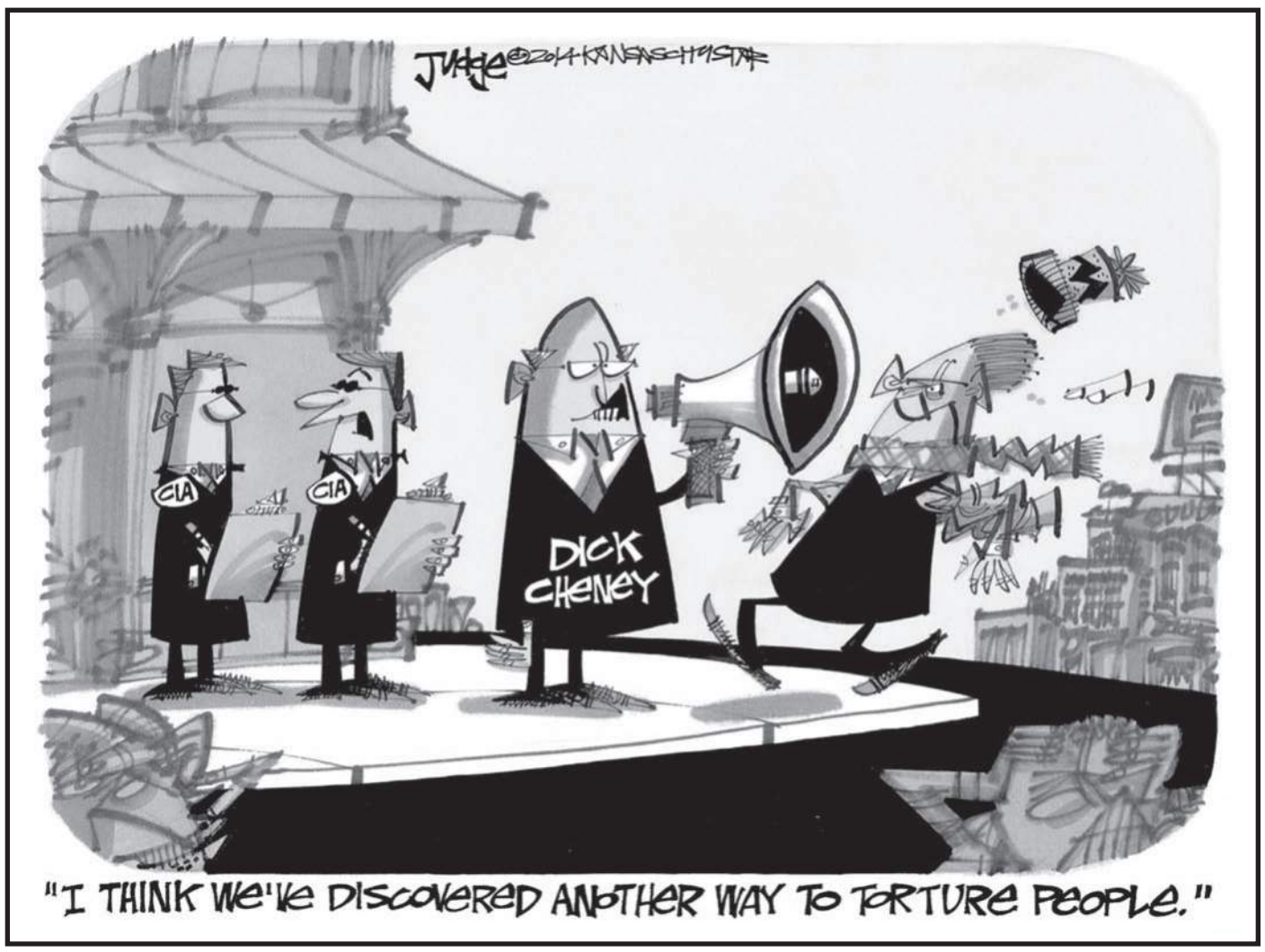
We all navigate through life as best we can. But we also gossip. We envy others. We chase the latest gadgets, the bigger home, the fancier car. These are normal impulses that can be channeled for good or ill, for healthy pursuit or destructive obsession. The pope's words invite us to examine how we live, how we pursue our goals and—most important—how we treat others.

Francis addressed another group on Monday as well: the Vatican staff, including gardeners and cleaning workers. The pope thanked them for their labor and asked "forgiveness for the shortcomings of my colleagues and myself, as well as for some scandals, which do great harm."

"Forgive me," he said.

Those are handy words in the world today. You aren't perfect.

See BLUNT on Next Page



Investing takes courage

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune *and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands.*

The term investment isn't an ordinary word among lay people. Beyond the fuzzy perception of "foreign investment"—exogenous or funds from without—for hotel and resort development here, it's basically tacit approval or dismissal.

It is hardly internalized or looked upon as something we've also done though on a different level. For instance, placing a portion of our income in savings is itself an investment. You do so for that rainy day while it earns interest.

The education of our children is the most lasting investment. We guide them through it so we could prepare them for life's challenges ahead.

Taking out real estate loan for the first family home is itself an investment though it's also known as dead asset. In other words, it doesn't generate money unless it is rented out. This doesn't happen too often in that the family needs a safe and sanitary dwelling for itself.

Your health insurance is an investment in the health of your family, including life insurance to ensure the family isn't piled with tons of debts when you exit early. These are forms of investments quite different and apart from normal stock purchases or new entrepreneurial start-ups.

For those who venture into investing, some would wait on the sidelines in hopes that things would break for the better. Others hold back for perceptual fear that the market would crash soon. If it doesn't crash and inches upwards, the bold group of investors make happy returns while procrastinators bite their fingers in sorry state of affairs.

A seasoned investment consultant who advises a lot of affluent communities throughout the country likens investing to that of the farmer. The farmer knows he has no control over the weather and all he needs is a single bad one that would pulp his plantation. He's done for the rest of the year. Regardless, what happens—good or bad—has no impact on what will happens next year.

"We continue to focus on what we can control and let the markets do their thing. Anything is possible in the short term while we stay disciplined and remain humbled by sticking to our long-term approach of employing diversified, low-cost portfolios and rebalancing regularly while always being mindful of opportunities to save on taxes and minimizing trading costs.

Equally true is the cooperation of Mother Nature. In other words, more often than not good weather pans out all year round allowing for good planting season. Thus the farmer continues returning every spring to spread his seeds. And with good weather his courage and bravery pays off handsomely at year's end. This is what investment is all about—braving the unforeseeable keeping your fingers crossed things work out in your favor.

In the interest of removing the decades' old mindset that money could only be found living paycheck to paycheck from the government, perhaps the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, in concert with the Commonwealth Development Authority and PSS, could begin mini-entrepreneurial classes at the high school level. It's a good place to start conveying to our young ones that there are better alternatives beyond government.

Farming potential

Thailand has become a prime mover in farming via small family farms. Its agricultural leadership had studied farming in the Philippines in the 1960s organized it over the last decade or so.

Other small island states with real time advances in agriculture include Taiwan, Singapore, and the Republic of the Philippines. The organized advances started with their respective universities taking the lead studying, e.g., small family farms including fishing.

This paradigm illustrates success where politicians are kept in the periphery. In this case, NMC could take the lead role that would eventually metastasize into a major entity in the development of the NMI's socio-economic plan.

Although the feds have equally contributed significantly to the deepening economic ruination, it won't lift a finger to fix the mess and not when we've promoted indigenous rights to self-government. Now, let's take this spout a step further by owning up to our responsibility in organizing a set of plans to move the needle of growth forward. It begins with the self.

A serious joint effort to take critical ocular probe of our future is an issue we can't treat with inconsequence. To wait until most investments have taken the "second exodus" would make life in the islands far more miserable than necessary. Must take into serious consideration the process involved resetting buttons on reinvestment of a ruined economy.

In simplicity

It was long time ago when I could go to our neighbor next door and ask for some salt to finish my cooking because we ran out of it. What we harvested from the old family farm like root crops and bananas we share with our neighbors. In return, they share their fish catch when master fishermen spearfish at night.

See INVESTING on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Amid climate change, what's more important: Protecting money or people?

By JAMES K. BOYCE
Los Angeles Times

James K. Boyce is a professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and a member of the Scholars Strategy Network.

At the latest round of international climate talks this month in Lima, Peru, melting glaciers in the Andes and recent droughts provided a fitting backdrop for the negotiators' recognition that it is too late to prevent climate change, no matter how fast we ultimately act to limit it. They now confront an issue that many had hoped to avoid: adaptation.

Adapting to climate change will carry a high price tag. Sea walls are needed to protect coastal areas against floods, such as those in the New York area when Superstorm Sandy struck in 2012. We need early-warning and evacuation systems to protect against human tragedies, such as those caused by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 and by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005.

Cooling centers and emergency services must be created to cope with heat waves, such as the one that killed 70,000 in Europe in 2003. Water projects are needed to protect farmers and herders from extreme droughts, such as the one that gripped the Horn of Africa in 2011. Large-scale replanting of forests with new species will be needed to keep pace as temperature gradients shift toward the poles.

Because adaptation won't come cheap, we must decide which investments are worth the cost.

A thought experiment illustrates the choices we face. Imagine that without major new investments in adaptation, climate change will cause world incomes to fall in the next two decades by 25 percent across the board, with everyone's income going down, from the poorest farmworker in Bangladesh to the wealthiest real estate baron in Manhattan. Adaptation can cushion some but not all of these losses. What should be our priority: reduce losses for the farmworker or the baron?

For the farmworker, and a billion others in the world who live on about $1 a day, this 25 percent income loss will be a disaster, perhaps the difference between life and death. Yet in dollars, the loss is just 25 cents a day.

For the land baron and other "one-percenters" in the U.S. with average incomes of about $2,000 a day, the 25 percent income loss would be a matter of regret, not survival. He'll find a way to get by on $1,500 a day.

In human terms, the baron's loss pales compared with that of the farmworker. But in dollar terms, it's 2,000 times larger.

Conventional economic models would prescribe spending more to protect the barons than the farmworkers of the world. The rationale was set forth with brutal clarity in a memorandum leaked in 1992 that was signed by Lawrence Summers, then chief economist of the World Bank. The memo asked whether the bank should encourage more migration of dirty industries to developing countries and concluded that "the economic logic of dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that." Climate change is just a new kind of toxic waste.

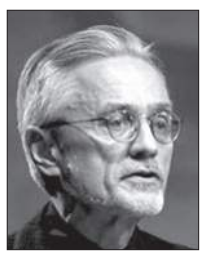
The "economic logic" of the Summers memo — later said to have been penned tongue-in-cheek to provoke debate, which it certainly did — rests on a doctrine of "efficiency" that counts all dollars equally. Whether it goes to a starving child or a millionaire, a dollar is a dollar. The task of economists, in this view, is to maximize the size of the total dollar pie. How it's sliced is not their problem.

A different way to set adaptation priorities is to count each person equally, not each dollar. This approach rests on the ethical principle that a healthy environment is a human right, not a commodity to be distributed on the basis of purchasing power, or a privilege to be distributed on the basis of political power.

This equity principle is widely embraced around the world, from the affirmation in the U.S. Declaration of Independence that people have an inalienable right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," to the guarantee in the South African Constitution that everyone has the right "to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being." It puts safeguarding the lives of the poor ahead of safeguarding the property of the rich.

In the years ahead, climate change will confront the world with hard choices: whether to protect as many dollars as possible, or to protect as many people as we can.

Ukraine should put Russia to Donbas test



By RAJAN MENON and ALEXANDER J. MOTYL
Los Angeles Times

Rajan Menon is a professor of political science in the Powell School at City College of New York and a senior research fellow at Columbia's Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies. He is coauthor of "Ukraine in Conflict," to be published in February. Alexander Motyl is a professor of political science at Rutgers University-Newark. His weekly blog, Ukraine's Orange Blues, appears on www.worldaffairsjournal.org.

Ukraine is now strong enough to seize the initiative to create a lasting cease-fire in its Donbas Rust Belt, currently occupied by Russia and its proxies. And Russia may be weak enough to be receptive. It is in Kiev's interest to do so. A state of permanent war with Russia would damage Ukraine's democracy, economy and security.

Almost imperceptibly, the tide seems to have turned in Ukraine's favor. The Ukrainian army has been able to withstand daily attacks by Russian troops. Ukraine's October parliamentary elections produced a pro-Western majority, and its technocratic government appears poised for radical reforms.

By contrast, the Russian economy is in deep trouble from plummeting oil prices and the bite of sanctions. Many Russians have died fighting in the Donbas enclave. And Russian President Vladimir Putin is increasingly isolated internationally.

Western pundits debate whether Russia's troubles make it more amenable to a political settlement in Ukraine or more aggressive. This question won't be resolved in argument. Russian intentions need to be put to the test.

Ukraine can devise such a test in a way that enables it to retain the political high ground while strengthening its security and prospects for economic reform. But first, Kiev must accept some uncomfortable realities.

Neither Crimea nor the two separatist pro-Russia republics in the Donbas area will return to Ukraine's fold anytime soon, if ever. Ukraine lacks the military and financial resources to retake them, and any move to do so would not get Western backing and could even erode American and European support for Ukraine.

Kiev should therefore act as if these breakaway eastern regions are no longer part of Ukraine. It's starting to do just that, as seen in its recent decision to end subsidies, pensions, veterans' benefits and postal and banking services to the Donbas statelets.

However, Kiev should not recognize these regions as belonging to Russia. That would be political suicide for a nascent government facing multiple challenges and it would be a needless gift to Moscow. Nor should Kiev say anything definitive about the territories' final status. Instead, Ukraine should keep its future options open while ceding responsibility for their economic upkeep to Russia.

Disengaging itself from Crimea and the Donbas enclave benefits Ukraine. These regions have been anti-reform, anti-Western, pro-Russia bastions since Ukraine's independence. Their detachment makes radical reform in Ukraine possible and deprives Russia of an important means for meddling in Ukrainian politics. So what looks like a loss is in fact a gain.

Moreover, industrial production in the Donbas enclave has fallen 80 percent, and coal mines, factories and infrastructure have been severely damaged. Kiev would be wise to let Russia bear the burden of repairing the region's economy.

Once Kiev bites the bullet on Crimea and Donbas, it should present Russia with a workable peace plan for the latter region, where the continuing conflict could still spawn a wider war. The plan would have four components:

The creation of a 30-mile "no-forces zone," half of it west and half of it east of the current line of fighting.

The introduction of third-party peacekeepers and observers to patrol the zone. The composition of the peacekeeping forces should be decided by the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with Ukraine and the separatist republics participating in the selection process.

The announcement of a symbolic pullback in certain areas—one that would not surrender any important assets but would demonstrate Ukraine's seriousness.

A pledge—lasting five years—to not apply to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

If the plan is accepted and works, the gains for Ukraine are obvious. It reduces the chances of an escalation in hostilities in the east. Russia's bona fides on peace would be tested. It creates an environment more conducive to economic reform.

The renunciation of NATO membership would make the plan particularly attractive to Russia without sacrificing anything of value to Kiev. The alliance won't admit Ukraine anytime soon, if at all, and its willingness to defend Ukraine is open to doubt.

Russia, and particularly Putin, would also benefit. Russia can ill afford another round of war as it faces a deep recession. More casualties—Russia may have lost as many as 4,000 soldiers in the last few months—would do no good for Putin's legitimacy or popularity. Cooperating with Ukraine would diminish Russia's isolation in the world.

Critics may charge that such an initiative is a cave-in to Putin's power plays and rewards Russian aggression. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ukraine would not be surrendering Crimea and Donbas, but merely acknowledging the current reality.

Ukraine needs peace if it is to initiate and sustain economic reforms, some of which will be painful. A permanent condition of war over territories that it lacks the wherewithal to regain and a preoccupation with membership in a security alliance that fears a military conflict with Russia makes no sense. Worse, war mortgages the well-being of 40 million Ukrainian citizens for the sake of a rhetorical, and presently undeliverable, commitment to the liberation of the 5 million in territories now under Russian control.

Ukraine has a unique opportunity to save itself. It should boldly seize it, test Russia's oft-proclaimed interest in peace and offer Putin a face-saving solution to his own woes.

INVESTING

From Page 10

We used to have community meetings to plan for upcoming events like family novenas, village fiesta for our village patron saint, weddings, and veneration of the Baby Jesus. Most everybody was there to participate in the discussion and subsequent assignments. We did it with generosity and humility. After all, it was our community!

This fabric or strong sense of communal sharing has slowly disappeared through the years as a myriad of changes and challenges descended in these isles. Things have changed so drastically I often settle for muted thoughts quizzing if the culture that once made us a very unique people is on its final journey out? I no longer could ask for salt nor attend village meetings treated with reverence.

BLUNT

From Page 10

You won't live forever. You're going to hurt people's feelings, make mistakes and blunder into messy situations. But what values will you invoke? What choices will you make?

This wasn't an exclusively Roman Catholic message, or even a particularly religious message. It's advice to all of us, on how all of us lead our lives.

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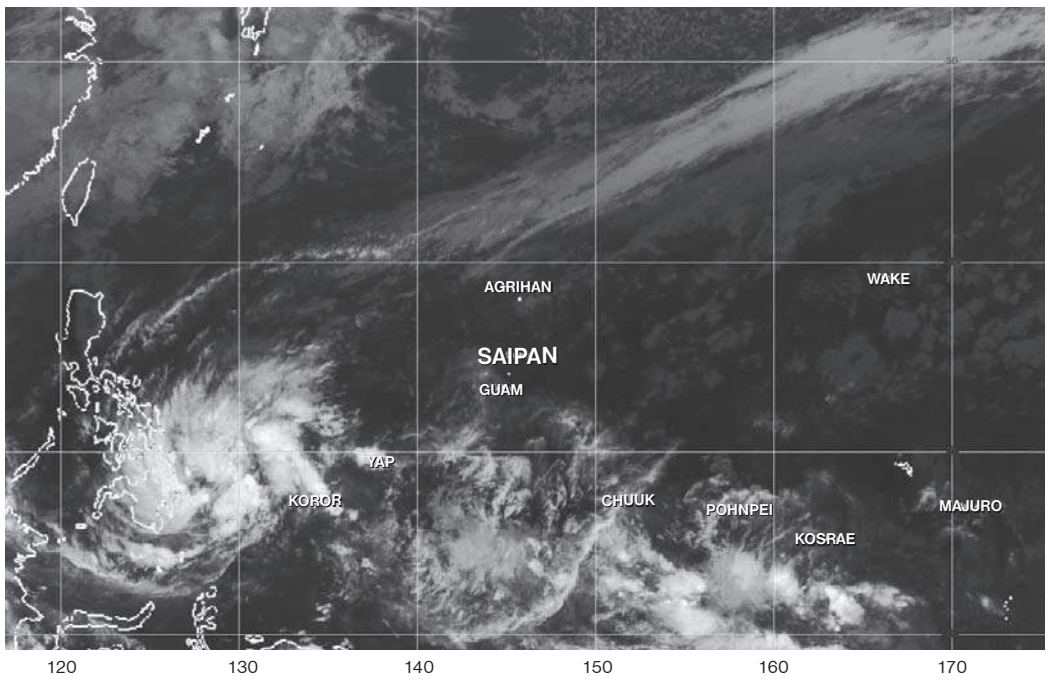
The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2014
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front curves southwestward from northeast of Wake Island through 25N168E to southeast of Minami Tori Shima at 23N160E then continues as a shear line to end at 14N130E. Clouds and scattered showers are present along and up to 400 miles northwest of this boundary. A near-equatorial trough runs southeastward from near Mindanao through 6N130E to end at EQ143E. Converging surface winds north of the trough are creating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms near Koror west of a line from 7N137E to 16N134E. Similar weather is also found near Yap within 50 miles of 9N138E. A trade-wind disturbance is causing scattered showers near Guam but west of Saipan within 65 miles of a line from 12N145E to 15N143E. Trade-wind convergence is coupling with divergent upper-level winds to trigger scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms from well south of Guam to south of Kosrae within 160 miles of a line from 5N141E to 1N166E.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

Micronesia

Guam And Rota	Showers	▲86	▼79
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼79
Yap	Partly Cloudy	▲85	▼79
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼81
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼80
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼81
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	▲85	▼81

Around the Globe

Auckland	Partly Cloudy	▲71	▼63
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲42	▼23
Hong Kong	Sunny	▲67	▼56
Honolulu	Sunny	▲79	▼66
London	Partly Cloudy	▲39	▼32
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲63	▼46
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	▲83	▼73
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	▲74	▼53
Miami	Partly Cloudy	▲81	▼68
New York	Partly Cloudy	▲44	▼33
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	▲55	▼38
Paris	Partly Cloudy	▲40	▼32
Pusan	Sunny	▲53	▼30
Rome	Partly Cloudy	▲40	▼29
Salem	Showers	▲41	▼24
San Francisco	Sunny	▲55	▼44
Seoul	Sunny	▲40	▼22
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	▲55	▼36
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	▲46	▼37

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Tides

Saipan Harbor

12:56 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.4 Feet
7:07 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.5 Feet
1:41 PM	Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
8:45 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.4 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Tuesday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Wednesday	6:43 AM	5:57 PM
Thursday	6:43 AM	5:59 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:59 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	12:24 AM	12:06 AM
Tuesday	1:10 PM	1:02 AM
Wednesday	1:57 PM	1:57 AM
Thurssday	2:45 PM	2:52 AM
Friday	3:35 PM	3:47 AM

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2014

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA5070	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA5068	8:00am	8:50am	3
UA5068	8:40am	9:30am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	2:20pm	4:00pm	6, 7 via Rota
UA5078	3:10pm	4:00pm	1, 5
UA5038	3:10pm	4:00pm	2, 4
UA5040	6:55pm	7:45pm	1, 5
UA5078	8:35pm	9:25pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5044	10:40pm	11:30pm	1, 5

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA5039	2:20pm	2:55pm	6, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA5039	3:25pm	4:00pm	6, 7

SAIPAN-PALAU (ROR)

DL287	6:05am	1:05am+1	2, 6 via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL287	6:05am	8:40am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
DL297	4:20pm	7:05pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ606	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ606	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ604	3:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
7C 3401	4:30pm	8:20pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764A	1:30am	5:30am	4, 7
MU764	1:30am	5:30am	1, 5

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:30am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ606/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN
OZ606/701	2:40am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5069/PR111	2:45am	4:50pm	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	7:20am	2, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	9:00am	3, 6 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	8:45pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	9:10pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
DL287/473	6:05am	9:50pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 6 via NRT
UA5071/PR111	6:40am	4:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5071/PR111	7:15am	4:50pm	1, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:00am	9:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:50pm	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5039/183	2:20pm	9:50pm	6, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	2 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	5 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	1 via GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	4 via GUM
OZ604/703	3:20pm	11:50pm	Daily via ICN

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ606/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:10am	12:50pm	1 via ICN
OZ606/721	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:40am	12:50pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5070/179	4:15am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:00am	10:35pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:40am	10:35pm	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5039/179	2:20pm	10:35pm	6 via Rota-GUM
UA5078/179	3:10pm	10:35pm	1, 5 via GUM
OZ604/749	3:20pm	10:30pm	Daily via ICN

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA5069	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA5071	6:40am	7:30am	3
UA5071	7:15am	8:05am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	1:00pm	1:50pm	6, 7
UA5038	1:10pm	2:40pm	2, 4 via Rota
UA5077	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 5
UA5041	5:35pm	6:25pm	1, 5
UA5077	7:15pm	8:05pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5043	9:20pm	10:10pm	1, 5

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA5038	1:10pm	1:45pm	2, 4

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA5038	2:05pm	2:40pm	2, 4

PALAU (ROR)-SAIPAN

DL298	4:30am	3:00pm	3, 7 via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:25am	3:00pm	Daily
DL288	8:55pm	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ603	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
7C 3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ605	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ605	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:30pm	5:50am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763A	4:30pm	12:30am+1	3, 6
MU763	4:30pm	12:30am+1	4, 7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:55pm	3:10am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ704/603	12:10am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
PR110/UA5041	7:35am	6:25pm	1,5 via GUM
PR110/UA5077	7:35am	8:05pm	3, 6, 7 via GUM
PR110/UA5043	7:35am	10:10pm	1, 5 via GUM
DL172/288	9:40am	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7 via NRT
UA190/5077	9:55am	8:05pm	2, 7 via GUM
UA190/5077	10:00am	8:05pm	3, 6 via GUM
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA184/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	4 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:59pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	2 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:59pm	6:25pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:59pm	8:05pm+1	2 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:59pm	10:10pm+1	5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ746/603	12:30am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
OZ750/603	1:10am	2:20pm	Daiily via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA180/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA180/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA180/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA180/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1, 5 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 6 via GUM
UA180/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1, 5 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju AirETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Mon, Tue,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

Missing skiff from Chuuk located at Namonuito Atoll

Six people, who had been missing at sea for four days, have been located at Namonuito Atoll which lies more than 70 miles west of their intended destination in the Hall Islands.

The six people departed Chuuk Atoll bound for the Hall Islands in an 18-foot skiff on December 23rd. They had been expected to arrive at Nomwin Atoll in the Hall Islands that afternoon, but they never did.

US Coast Guard Rescue Sub-Center Guam was notified that the six people were overdue on December 26th when the center was asked to assist the Federated States of Micronesia and Chuuk State authorities with their search for the missing skiff.

The motor vessel *Andrea Palladio*, an Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER) volunteer participant, searched on December 27th without success. A US Navy P-8 Poseidon long-range aircraft was dispatched from Kadena Air Base, Japan and a US Coast Guard C-130 was dispatched from Hawaii to assist with the search on December 28th, however the skiff was located and the search was cancelled.

The six people have been reported to be in good health and are safe. ***(USCG)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Marpi Landfill closed on Jan. 1

The Lower Base Transfer Station and the Marpi Landfill will be closed on Thursday, Jan. 1, 2015, in observance of New Year's Day. Regular schedule will resume Friday, Jan. 2, and Saturday, Jan. 3, 2015, from 7:30am to 11:30am and 12:30pm to 4pm. ***(PR)***

Route 16 Road repairs

ASAN, Guam—North and southbound inner lanes in the vicinity of Commercial Tire in Barrigada will be closed from Dec. 27-31, as Navy contractors conduct asphalt repairs on Route 16.

Motorists traveling north and southbound are advised to follow all posted signs and speed limits to ensure safety.

Repairs are expected to continue through the end of January.

Schedules and repair activities are subject to change as weather or other conditions permit. The public is encouraged to stay tuned to local media for updates.

For more information, contact the Joint Region Marianas Public Affairs Office at (671) 349-4055/3209. ***(PR)***

Navy training on Farallon de Medinilla

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. Navy will conduct training at the island of Farallon de Medinilla on Dec. 29-30 from 4:30pm to 9:30pm. The general public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators are advised to stay clear from the area during the date and time indicated. The general location of the training on the island of Farallon de Medinilla will be on a 10-nautical mile radius on all quadrants.

Farallon de Medinilla plays a special and unique role in national defense because its location provides frequent access that supports training requirements. In addition, the air and sea space in the Farallon provides sufficient room for the many different attack profiles necessary to replicate training opportunities for aircraft in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. ***(PR)***

'Love islands' films on Saipan, Tinian

Bateman

The Chinese television drama "Love Islands" recently filmed on Saipan and Tinian for an episode that will air in February 2015.

"Love Islands," titled "Bian Shen Hua Mei Nan" in Chinese, consists of Chinese and Korean actors and has 10-million viewers in mainland China.

"The upcoming ad exposure from 'Love Islands' is really good for the Northern Marianas, because the sites visited in Saipan and Tinian will become better known to this large audience which will help bring more tourists from both China and Korea," said Marianas Visitors Authority marketing manager Bruce Bateman.

The episode is expected to feature scenes filmed at various tour sites, including Micro Beach, along Beach Rd., Mariana Resort & Spa, T Galleria, and Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino. The production team also conducted aerial shooting via helicopter.

"Love Islands" is produced by Beijing Yin He Century Film Company. ***(MVA)***

2014 CNMI Got Talent

PHOTOS BY MARK RABAGO

Northern Marianas College student Verina Saralu showed off her singing talent during the 2014 CNMI Got Talent.

Tinian's Joshua Castro rapped during his performance in the 2014 CNMI Got Talent.

Rhythm & Harmony bested 13 other performers to win the grand prize of the 2014 CNMI Got Talent held last Dec. 19 at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan Magellan. The MHS Glee Club also won Best Team and the Governor's Choice Award.

Out of the Ordinary, a group of talented students who enjoy music, won the First Mini Grand Prize.

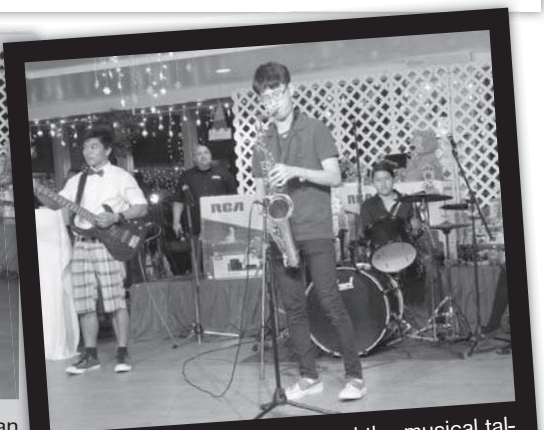
Angela Barbo, a 7th grader at Hopwood Jr. High School, came away with the fourth runner-up prize.

The MHS Dolphin Pep Band finished first runner-up in their CNMI Got Talent debut.

Saipan Southern High School senior Jeffrey Centino shared his dexterity with the guitar during his performance.

The Glushko Ballerinas—Cerinn Hwang, Fay Sizemore, Annabelle Sablan, and Sakura Imaya—once again brought grace in this year's CNMI Got Talent competition, which was enough to give them the third runner-up prize.

TK Pacifiku gave everyone a sample of Polynesian dance during the 2014 CNMI Got Talent.



The Full Mun band showcased the musical talents of saxophonist Bohyun Mun.

D.J. Santino proved that big things come in small packages with his rendition of Mariah Carey's *All I Want for Christmas Is You*. He won the second runner-up prize.

Abby Racoma made everyone in attendance smile with the pop music she was able to strum out of her ukulele. Emcee Jojo Camacho interviews her here after her number.

Tinian's Nikki Ayuyu won the fifth runner-up award as well as the Best in Tinian award with his very own Christmas composition.

Saipan Community School 5th grade student Kevin Liang wowed the audience with his talent playing the violin, which was enough to win him the Second Mini Grand Prize.

Business

Japan's Abe unleashes stimulus plan to spur growth

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's Cabinet approved 3.5 trillion yen ($29 billion) in fresh stimulus Saturday for the ailing economy, pledging to get growth back on track and restore the country's precarious public finances.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is wrapping up his second year in office hard-pressed to salvage a recovery that fizzled into recession after a sales tax hike in April.

The stimulus plan endorsed by the Cabinet includes 600 billion yen ($5 billion) earmarked for stagnant regional economies. It also lays out Abe's vision for countering longer term trends such as Japan's surging public debt and a declining and aging population.

"A strong economy is the wellspring of Japan's national strength," said a summary of the plan released by the government.

It pledged to restore vitality to local regions to enable young Japanese "to have dreams and hopes for the future."

But the document also acknowledged the narrow policy options open to Japan's leaders given the country's massive public debt, which is twice the size of the economy.

The government is sticking to its pledge to balance its budget by 2020, despite a recent decision by Abe to defer a tax hike due for next year until April 2017.

Abe has sought to spur growth and end a long spell of deflation through aggressive monetary easing and increased public spending. He also promised to undertake bold steps to break through the "bedrock" of Japan's vested interests and bureaucracy, but has made little headway in areas such as labor and farm sector reforms.

After taking office for a third term following a snap election earlier this month, the prime minister faces growing pressure to show that his "Abenomics" strategy for nurturing growth through inflation can succeed.

The Democratic Party of Japan, the leading opposition party, issued a statement Saturday expressing its disappointment with the stimulus plan, which it said relied on old pork barrel tactics that have failed in the past.

AP

In this Dec. 15, 2014 file photo, Japanese Prime Minister and leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party Shinzo Abe, left, arrives for a press conference at the party headquarters in Tokyo.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Belarus replaces prime minister, central bank head

MINSK, Belarus (AP)—Belarus' authoritarian president on Saturday replaced his prime minister, the head of the national bank and an array of other top officials as the country weathers economic troubles. The economics and industry ministers also were replaced by President Alexander Lukashenko on Saturday. He appointed his former chief of staff, Andrei Kobyakov, as the new premier. Belarus has retained a Soviet-style command economy to a large degree and concerns are rising that it will suffer from a spillover of the economic crisis in neighboring Russia. Earlier this month, Belarus imposed a 30-percent fee on currency exchanges in a move to stave off panic.

Germany: Greece must stick to existing agreements

BERLIN (AP)—Germany's finance minister says any new Greek government would have to stick to agreements made by its predecessors—comments that come as Greece risks early elections that could bring an anti-bailout opposition party to power. The Greek government has a third and final chance Monday to get a new president elected. If it fails, parliamentary elections will be called. The Syriza party, which has said it wants the country's bailout program renegotiated, leads in polls. German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble told Saturday's Bild daily that he'll continue to support Greece on its "path of hard reforms" but if Athens chooses another road, "it will be difficult." Schaeuble said that "new elections won't change anything about Greece's debts. Any new government must abide by the legal agreements of its predecessors."

PlayStation, Xbox outages spark debate over hacker claims

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Sony's PlayStation network remained offline Friday on the second day of an outage that began roiling the online world just as eager video game players were unwrapping new consoles on Christmas morning.

Microsoft's Xbox Live service, which also went down Thursday, was back online Friday although the company reported reported problems with some functions in the afternoon.

Credit for the disruptions was claimed on Twitter by a group of self-proclaimed hackers called Lizard Squad—or someone purporting to speak for it. But many video game enthusiasts and some other hacker groups quickly condemned their actions. Even the notorious Kim Dotcom, a New Zealand-based online entrepreneur who's been accused of abetting Internet piracy, got into the act by offering free vouchers for his online privacy service if the Lizard Squad would agree to restore the Xbox network.

A Lizard Squad account on Twitter appeared to credit Dotcom's offer for the partial restoration of Xbox service on Friday. But exactly what happened is still unclear: Neither Sony nor Microsoft would say what disrupted their networks. And experts say it's difficult to trace the source of attacks or confirm claims of responsibility.

The BIG DEAL
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2014 NissanAltima
2.5-liter 4-cylinder engine. Xtronic CVT®. Bluetooth®. Advanced Drive-Assist® Display. Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) with Easy-Fill Tire Alert. The Altima driving experience is where innovation pays off. Fluid, powerful acceleration, refined handling, and a class leading 38 MPG fuel economy. In an Altima, passing the pump is as easy as passing that truck up ahead. The advanced, driver-focused technologies of the Altima aren't there for show—they have purpose. Instrumentation designed to keep you informed while helping minimize distraction.

2014 CLEARANCE

FORD	STOCK #	Color	Discount
Fiesta S	EM225300	White	$2,500.00
~~Fiesta SE~~	~~EM22~~ SOLD	~~Blue~~	~~$2,500.00~~
Fiesta SE	EM225301	Gray	$2,500.00
~~Escape S~~	~~EUD1~~ SOLD	~~Gray~~	~~$3,000.00~~
Escape S	EUD12669	Blue	$3,000.00
Escape SE	EUB67717	Red	$3,500.00
~~Explorer EcoBoost~~	~~EGB2~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$4,000.00~~
Explorer XLT 4WD	EGB05148	Darkside	$4,000.00
F150 STX 4WD	EKE73316	Silver	$5,000.00

NISSAN	STOCK #	Color	Discount
Altima SV	EC177739	Mocha	$3,000.00
Altima SV	EC157024	White	$3,000.00
Rogue S	EC754914	Silver	$3,000.00
NV200 SV	EK696537	White	$3,000.00
~~Frontier SV~~	~~EN71~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$3,000.00~~
Frontier PRO4X	EN747027	Red	$4,000.00
Xterra PRO4X	EN807863	Red	$4,000.00
Maxima SV Sport	EC457171	Mocha	$4,000.00
~~Pathfinder Platinum~~	~~EC65~~ SOLD	~~Gray~~	~~$5,000.00~~

HONDA	STOCK #	Color	Discount
~~Civic LX~~	~~EE06553~~ SOLD	~~White~~	~~$2,500.00~~
~~Civic LX~~	~~EE00224~~ SOLD	~~Blue~~	~~$2,500.00~~
Civic LX	EE046655	Maroon	$2,500.00
Civic LX	EE065865	Silver	$2,500.00
~~Accord LX~~	~~EA26617~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~Accord EX~~	~~EA18773~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~CR-V LX~~	~~EL02628~~ SOLD	~~Blue~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~CR-V EX~~	~~EL02846~~ SOLD	~~Mocha~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~Odyssey EX~~	~~EB11100~~ SOLD	~~Gray~~	~~$4,000.00~~

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Nation

NYC officer mourned at funeral as tensions linger

NEW YORK (AP)—Thousands of police officers from across the nation packed a church and spilled onto streets Saturday to honor Officer Rafael Ramos as a devoted family man, aspiring chaplain and hero, though an air of unrest surrounding his ambush shooting was not completely pushed aside.

While mourners inside the church applauded politely as Mayor Bill de Blasio spoke, hundreds of officers outside turned their backs on him to protest what they see as his support for demonstrators angry over killings by police.

The rush of officers far and wide to New York for Ramos' funeral reminded some of the bond after the Sept. 11 attacks and Superstorm Sandy. Vice President Joe Biden promised that the "incredibly diverse city can and will show the nation how to bridge any divide."

Still, tensions were evident when officers turned away from giant screens showing de Blasio, who has been harshly criticized by New York Police Department union officials as a contributor to a climate of mistrust that preceded the killings of Ramos and his partner, Wenjian Liu.

AP

The body of New York City police officer Rafael Ramos is brought from Christ Tabernacle Church draped in an NYPD flag after his funeral in the Glendale section of Queens, where he was a church member, Saturday, Dec. 27, 2014, in New York.

Sgt. Myron Joseph of the New Rochelle Police Department said he and fellow officers turned their backs spontaneously to "support our brothers in the NYPD."

In a statement, de Blasio's spokesman said: "The Ramos and Liu families, our police department and our city are dealing with an unconscionable tragedy. Our sole focus is unifying this city and honoring the lives of our two police officers."

The NYPD said through its public relations office that it had no comment.

In his eulogy, de Blasio said hearts citywide were broken after the Dec. 20 shootings.

"All of this city is grieving and grieving for so many reasons," de Blasio said. "But the most personal is that we've lost such a good man, and the family is in such pain."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo praised the sea of blue mourners for their professionalism at recent rallies over police conduct when protesters insulted them, and Biden spoke passionately about the effects of the officers' deaths.

"When an assassin's bullet targeted two officers, it targeted this city and it touched the soul of an entire nation," the vice president said.

Police union officials in contentious contract negotiations with the city have faulted de Blasio for showing sympathy to protesters angry over the police deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner on Staten Island.

At a hospital after the officers' slayings, the police union's president, Patrick Lynch, and others turned their backs on de Blasio. Lynch said the mayor had "blood on his hands."

After the funeral, Lynch and de Blasio exchanged nods as they exited the church. Lynch refused to answer reporters' questions about officers turning their backs.

Weeks before the shooting, Lynch had suggested officers sign a petition requesting that the mayor not attend their funerals were they to die in the line of duty.

Soon after taking office this year, de Blasio dropped the city's opposition to a judge's finding that the police department discriminated against minorities with its anti-crime stop-and-frisk tactics.

But since last week's shootings, de Blasio has stood firmly by police, calling on demonstrators to temporarily halt protests and praising the department after it arrested several men charged with threatening police.

Key developments in police-communities tension

The killings of two unarmed blacks by white police officers in Missouri and New York this summer touched off protests and a national debate over police conduct that intensified after grand juries refused to indict the officers.

Tensions escalated further after two New York City police officers were killed a week ago by a man who suggested in online posts that their deaths were in retaliation for the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in New York City. The gunman committed suicide.

Some key developments in the aftermath of the tragedies:

SLAIN OFFICER'S FUNERAL

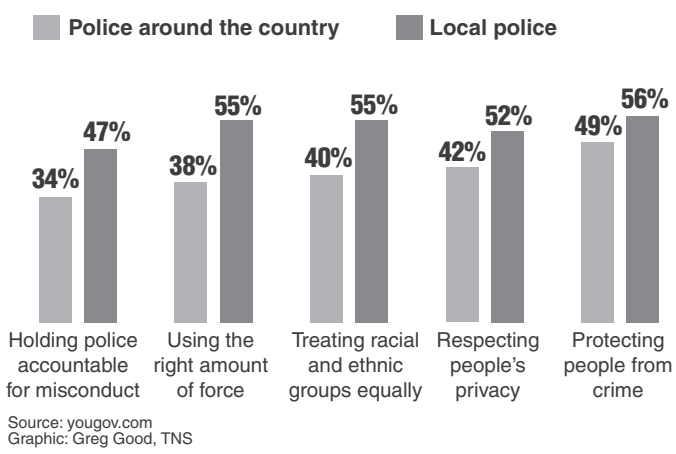
Vice President Joe Biden and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio spoke Saturday at the funeral for Officer Rafael Ramos, who was shot to death a week ago along with his partner. Thousands of officers from across the nation packed a church and spilled onto streets to honor Ramos.

De Blasio has been criticized by the police union for his handling of protests in the wake of Garner's death and the subsequent grand jury decision. Mourners inside the church applauded politely as de Blasio spoke, but hundreds of officers outside turned their backs on giant screens showing the mayor.

Funeral plans for Ramos' partner, Officer Wenjian Liu, have yet to be announced.

How Americans feel about the police

A Yougov poll asked how good a job do you think police departments around the country/in your local community are doing in the following areas?



Source: yougov.com
Graphic: Greg Good, TNS

RALLIES SUPPORTING POLICE

A "Sea of Blue" demonstration Saturday in downtown Cleveland drew several thousand people, a surprise to area police dispatcher Mary Jo Graves, who created the event and promoted it with a Facebook page. Many in the crowd wore blue as requested, walking silently from Public Square to a police memorial park to honor Ramos.

Cleveland has seen a number of anti-police protests recently, some prompted by the Nov. 21 fatal shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, who was holding a pellet gun when a police car responded to a report of a man with a gun.

Elsewhere, more than 200 people gathered in downtown Denver to support police officers Saturday. The day before, 50 people turned out for a "Blue Lives Matter Too" rally in Dubuque, Iowa, and another 200 gathered in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

RALLIES CRITICAL OF POLICE

About 200 people attended a rally Saturday in Chicago with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, including many who came from Milwaukee to protest the April death of a black man who was shot by a white officer.

Former Milwaukee officer Christopher Manney shot Dontre Hamilton 14 times in a downtown park. Manney was fired in October for ignoring department policy, but the county district attorney announced Monday that he would not file charges because he said Manney acted in self-defense.

Hamilton's family members, who attended the rally, have said the 31-year-old suffered from schizophrenia. Jackson told the crowd, "We cannot stand by and let this happen without saying something." Federal investigators have said they'll look into the shooting.

PROTESTER CHARGED WITH ARSON

A protester who advocated for peaceful demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri, was charged Saturday with setting fire to a convenience store after another fatal police shooting this week in nearby Berkeley.

'I CAN'T BREATHE' SHIRTS BANNED

The Mendocino High School boys and girls basketball teams were uninvited from a tournament in northern California because of concerns the players would wear "I Can't Breathe" T-shirts while warming up.

The boys team was reinstated after all but one player agreed not to wear the shirts anywhere on the campus, according to the Mendocino Unified School District Superintendent, but too few girls accepted the condition to field a squad.

Garner, who was put in a chokehold by an officer, was heard gasping, "I can't breathe" before he lost consciousness and later died.

The three-day tournament will start Monday.

Death penalty states unmoved by botched execution

McALESTER, Okla. (AP)—Oklahoma's last execution went so badly that the state tried to cancel it before it was over. With the inmate writhing while the lethal drugs seeped into his body, his executioners drew the viewing gallery curtains, concealing what the warden later described as "a bloody mess."

The botched execution of Clayton Lockett in April and other troubling ones this year in Ohio and Arizona gave capital punishment opponents a flicker of hope that areas of the country that most enthusiastically support the death penalty might have a change of heart. They didn't.

Although Gov. Mary Fallin suspended further executions so that Lockett's death and Oklahoma's methods could be reviewed, the state held what amounted to a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its overhauled death chamber only months later and is scheduled to resume killing inmates in mid-January. And rather than causing states to question whether capital punishment is just or worth the risk of subjecting someone to a potentially agonizing death, the prolonged executions and problems states have had securing lethal injection drugs have led them to explore new, old and more efficient ways of killing, including gassing inmates.

"I think we had a little flash of hope that it would help our cause, but all it did was generate a lot of conversation about it," said Lydia Polley, a longtime member of the Oklahoma Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. "It just led to people thinking of better ways to kill them."

School bans 'I Can't Breathe' T-shirts at tournament

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—A high school basketball tournament on the Northern California coast has become the latest flashpoint in the ongoing protests over police killings of unarmed black men after a school was disinvited because of concerns its players would wear T-shirts printed with the words "I Can't Breathe" during warmups.

The athletic director at Fort Bragg High School informed his counterpart at Mendocino High School this week that neither the boys nor girls team would be allowed to participate in the three-day tournament hosted by Fort Bragg High starting Monday, Mendocino Unified School District Superintendent Jason Morse said.

The boys were reinstated after all but one player agreed not to wear the shirts inspired by the last words of Eric Garner, the New York man who died after an officer put him in a chokehold, while on the Fort Bragg campus during the Vern Piver Holiday Classic tournament, Morse said. Too few girl players accepted the condition for the team to field a tournament squad, he said.

Mendocino varsity teams first wore the "I Can't Breathe" T-shirts before a game with Fort Bragg on Dec. 16, according to the girls coach, Caedyn Feehan. The girls also wore them before games at two other tournaments and didn't receive any blowback, Feehan said.

"I didn't even know what it meant. I thought it was a joke about how I had conditioned them so hard," Feehan said. "None of the administrators knew what it was or that any of them were doing it in advance. This was entirely for their cause that they had strong feelings about."

Asia

AirAsia plane with 161 on board missing in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—An AirAsia plane with 161 people on board lost contact with ground control on Sunday while flying over the Java Sea after taking off from a provincial city in Indonesia for Singapore, and search and rescue operations were underway.

AirAsia, a regional low-cost carrier with presence in several Southeast Asian countries, said in a statement that the missing plane was an Airbus A320-200 and that search and rescue operations were in progress.

Flight QZ8501 lost communication with Jakarta's air traffic control at 7:24 a.m. Singapore time (2324 GMT Saturday) about an hour before it was scheduled to land in Singapore, the Singapore Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement. The contact was lost about 42 minutes after the single-aisle jetliner took off from Indonesia's Surabaya airport, Hadi Mustofa, an official of the transportation ministry told Indonesia's MetroTV.

The plane had six crew and 155 passengers, including 16 children and one infant, the general manager of Surabaya's Juanda airport, Trikora Raharjo, told The Associated Press.

There were six foreigners—three South Koreans including an infant and one each from Singapore, Britain and Malaysia, said Raharjo. The rest were Indonesians, he said.

The plane lost contact when it was believed to be over the Java Sea between Kalimantan and Java islands, Mustofa said. He said the weather in the area was cloudy.

9 killed, 10 missing in Sri Lanka mudslides

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—At least nine people were killed and 10 others were missing in mudslides triggered by heavy rains Friday in the central hills of Sri Lanka, officials said.

More than 60,000 people have been evacuated and 3,000 homes destroyed as floods and mudslides have covered many parts of the Indian Ocean island in the last four days, disaster officials said.

Nine people were killed and two injured in mudslides Friday in the tea-growing Badulla district when their houses were buried in landslides, said Udaya Kumara, an official at the state disaster management center. Ten others were missing and rescue operations were temporarily halted due to risk of further landslides, he said.

The inclement weather has so far affected more than 500,000 people across the country.

The meteorology department has warned that thundershowers and heavy rains will occur in many parts of the island nation and asked people in coastal areas to be vigilant.

It is monsoon season in some parts of Sri Lanka, but many other areas not normally affected are also experiencing nonseasonal rains.

Dozens of people were killed in October when mudslides buried homes of tea plantation workers in the country's central hills.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-15-004

SECURITY GUARD SERVICES

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), Office of the Executive Director is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms to provide Security Guard Services for various posts at CUC, Saipan, Tinian and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check, wire transfer or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one package set. Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division by December 29, 2014 to be considered.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a site visitation of CUC Saipan Facilities will be held on **December 30, 2014** at 10:00 a.m. (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building. A site visitation of CUC Rota Facilities will be conducted on January 2, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST). A site visitation of CUC Tinian Facilities will be conducted on January 5, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST).

Contractors must provide proof of "Indemnity Liability Insurance," specifically covering security workers assigned to CUC's compound. Coverage must be a minimum of $200,000.00. The Contractor shall agrees to and indemnify and hold CUC harmless from and against all liability, loss, damage or injury, and all cost and expenses (including attorneys' fees and costs of any suit related thereto) suffered or incurred by the Cooperative, arising from or related to Contractor's negligent performance under the contract.

Bidders shall provide a certification signed by a principal of the company stating that the company is currently in full compliance with all applicable CNMI and Federal Labor Laws and has been for the past Five (5) years. Bidders shall submit a listing of all of its employees (US & Foreign) with corresponding job titles and a certification of good standing from the CNMI Department of Labor. Failure of the company to provide the certification is grounds to reject the entire bid.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-15-004, Security Guard Services", to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST, Saipan Time) on January 15, 2015** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bid in anticipation of a contract. This request and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on **December 31, 2014** to Manny B. Sablan, Purchasing Officer, CUC Procurement & Supply Division via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Vincent Pangelinan, Safety Officer, CUC Compliance & Safety Division via email address vince.pangelinan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and to waive any defects in said bid, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

COMMONWEALTH CASINO COMMISSION
PO Box 500135 Saipan MP 96950

EXAMINATION ANNOUNCEMENT NO. CCC-14-001
OPENING DATE: 12/24/14
CLOSING DATE: 01/07/15

This examination is for the purpose of developing an Open Competitive and Promotional Eligibility list. It is the policy of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands that the personnel system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

POSITION AND SALARY: ***EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR***

Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience.

LOCATION: Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

POSITION SUMMARY
The Executive Director is responsible for the overall administration of the Commonwealth Casino Commission (the "Commission" or "CCC"). The Executive Director ensures that the Commission exercises its authority in compliance with Public Law 18-56 and other Commonwealth laws, Agreements, Rules and Regulations. He/She will be responsible for directing and managing the regulatory activities of the Commission to ensure the gaming industry performs in compliance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Casino Act of 2014 (Public Law 18-56) as well as industry best practices. The Executive Director reports to and is supervised by the Commission.

Note: This job posting is intended to describe the general nature and level of work to be performed by the assigned person. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, skills or working conditions.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION
Pursuant to CNMI Public Law 18-56 § 2315

- A Bachelor's Degree from a United States accredited educational institution or equivalent
- Five (5) years work experience in professional, administrative or management in government or private sectors
- Good ethical and moral character
- Must posses a clean criminal history and must not have been convicted of any crime in any jurisdiction of the United States, or any foreign country carrying a minimum sentence of imprisonment of more than six months, excepting traffic offence
- Must not have any interest, directly or indirectly, in any business under the jurisdiction of the Commission

MINIMUM BACKGROUND REQUIREMENTS
Applicant must submit to and pass background screen, including, but not limited to drug and criminal record investigation. Certain information discovered could result in ineligibility for employment with the Commonwealth Casino Commission. The Commission will require a personal financial disclosure prior to making a final decision.

Applicant must be a US Citizen or US Permanent Resident. CNMI Government Excepted Service benefits will apply.

INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS SHOULD REQUEST A COPY OF THE COMPLETE JOB DESCRIPTION.

CONTACT PERSON:
Ruth Ann P. Sakisat
Commonwealth Casino Commission
C/O The Office of the Governor, 1st Floor
PO Box 500135
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(670) 237-2214

OR EMAIL REQUEST TO:
commonwealthcasinocommission@gmail.com

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-15-008

8" ACP WATERLINE ABANDONMENT FOR SAN VICENTE SERVICE AREA EXTENSION PROJECT, SAIPAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the 8" ACP Waterline Abandonment for San Vicente Service Area Extension Project, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. This work consists of disconnecting customer service lateral connections off the 8" ACP and reconnecting these customers on to the proper tank service area distribution main. Work will also consist of installing new gate valve assemblies and the abandonment of the 8" ACP waterline. Payment is only for the items completely installed and accepted by CUC. The duration of the contract is 190 calendar days from date of award of the contract.

This project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a site visit is scheduled on **December 31, 2014 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan.

One (1) original and Seven (7) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"8" ACP Waterline Abandonment for San Vicente Service Area Extension Project, Saipan"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 20, 2015**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. *A Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. The award of a contract may be contingent upon the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) approval. If CPUC approval is required, the contract will not be executed by CUC until such approval is provided.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 2, 2015** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., Purchasing Officer, Procurement & Supply Division via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Yvonne Cabrera, Engineer, Water & Wastewater Division via email yvonne.cabrera@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

World

US mission in Havana to become embassy amid thaw

HAVANA (AP)—A half-century after Washington severed relations with Cuba, the United States' seven-story mission looms over Havana's seaside Malecon boulevard as the largest diplomatic outpost in the country.

Cuban guards stand at close intervals on the street outside, and islanders line up by the thousands each year for a shot at a coveted visa.

The gleaming U.S. Interests Section suddenly is poised to become an even more important presence in Cuba as the two countries negotiate the first phase of their historic detente—transforming the complex into a full embassy that would reflect the Obama administration's hopes of new influence on the communist island.

Roberta Jacobson, assistant U.S. secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, will be the highest known U.S. administration official to visit in decades when she comes next month for annual talks on migration that will now also focus on the details of re-establishing full diplomatic relations.

The discussions are expected to cover expanding staffing in the two countries' interests sections and letting diplomats travel outside their respective capitals without having to ask permission.

Also part of the reopening of the embassy: symbolic measures such as raising the American flag on the Malecon.

"Opening an embassy is a symbolic gesture, but symbols are really important," John Caulfield, who was Interests Section chief from 2011 to 2014, said by phone from Jacksonville, Florida, where he retired.

AP

This Dec. 17, 2014 file photo shows a classic American car driving past the U.S. Interests Section building in Havana, Cuba.

"This is a pretty powerful symbol by our president that we want to have a more normal relationship with Cuba despite the fact that we have the obvious differences," he added.

Cuba's interests section is a stately manor in Washington's Adams Morgan neighborhood. It, too, stands to become an embassy.

Diplomats say privately that Washington hopes to boost staffing in Havana, currently at about 50 Americans and 300 Cuban workers, as more American travelers and trade delegates are expected to come here under new rules to be set by the White House softening the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba.

An agreement could also ease or scrap rules that require U.S. diplomats to channel all requests through Cuba's Foreign Ministry; the diplomats would be able to deal directly with at least some other branches of government.

The U.S. Interests Section has often been a flashpoint for conflict, and its decades of hybrid status reflect the dysfunctional relationship between the two deeply intertwined countries.

The building first opened as an embassy in 1953, the same year Fidel Castro launched an ill-fated assault on a barracks that is considered the onset of the Cuban Revolution.

Eight years later, with Castro then in power, the countries broke ties and Switzerland stepped in to safeguard both the embassy and the ambassador's residence, a sprawling, immaculately groomed estate in Havana's finest neighborhood.

After the break, Washington was without a presence in Cuba until 1977, when the interests sections were opened under President Jimmy Carter. The missions technically operate under the aegis of the "protecting power" Switzerland.

Cuba later built the adjacent "Anti-Imperialist Plaza," which has hosted nationalist rallies where Castro gave long speeches railing against Washington, and concerts demanding the return of the Cuban intelligence agents whom the U.S. freed last week as part of the detente. Huge marches streamed past the Interests Section in 2000 to demand the return of the young Cuban rafter Elian Gonzalez.

WORLD BRIEFS

Wanted extremist leader surrenders in Somalia

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—A leader with the Islamic extremist group al-Shabab, who had a $3 million bounty on his head, surrendered in Somalia, a Somali intelligence official said Saturday. Zakariya Ismail Ahmed Hersi surrendered to Somali police in the Gedo region, said the intelligence officer, who insisted on anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the press. Hersi may have surrendered because he fell out with those loyal to Ahmed Abdi Godane, al-Shabab's top leader who was killed in a U.S. airstrike earlier this year, the officer said. Hersi was one of seven top al-Shabab officials whom the Obama administration offered a total $33 million in rewards for information leading to their capture in 2012. It is not clear if the reward will be paid out for Hersi because he surrendered.

John Paul II gunman lays flowers at Vatican tomb

VATICAN CITY (AP)—The Turkish gunman who shot and wounded John Paul II in 1981 laid white flowers Saturday on the saint's tomb in St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican officials said. The surprise visit by Mehmet Ali Agca, believed to be his first time in the Vatican since the assassination attempt, lasted a few minutes, a Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Ciro Benedettini, said. As with other flowers left by visitors to the tomb, the blossoms were later removed by basilica workers. Benedettini said there are no legal matters pending against Agca in the Vatican and he was free to visit. Agca's trip came on the 31st anniversary of his meeting with the pope. John Paul, who forgave his attacker, visited Agca in a Rome prison on Dec. 27, 1983, and later intervened to gain Agca's release in 2000. Agca was extradited to Turkey For the 1979 killing of a Turkish journalist and he completed a 10-year sentence there in 2010.

Syria 'ready to participate' in Moscow peace talks

DAMASCUS (AP)—Syrian state-run TV said Saturday that the government is prepared to take part in peace talks hosted by Russia next month, but the unnamed foreign ministry official it cited suggested the scope of the negotiations would be limited to "preliminary" talks meant to pave the way for a conference in Syria itself.

The official was quoted as saying the government was "ready to participate in preparatory, advisory meetings in Moscow" that would "answer the aspirations of Syrians to find an exit from the crisis."

Russia's Foreign Ministry had said Thursday that it hoped to host peace talks after Jan. 20 between the Syrian government and its fractured opposition. The nearly four-year conflict has claimed over 200,000 lives, displaced a third of Syria's population, and nurtured an extremist group, the Islamic State, which now rules over vast swaths of Syria and neighboring Iraq.

Russia is a staunch ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad. The Western-backed Syrian opposition has insisted that any negotiated settlement include the formation of a transitional governing body with full executive powers, a demand rejected by Assad's government.

Hadi Bahra, the head of the Syrian National Coalition, the main Western-backed opposition group, said it had not yet made a decision on the talks.

"We can't give a response to something that's still hanging in the air," Bahra said. "There are no invitations, and what are they inviting us to? Is there a negotiations framework? Who will come? What is the aim?"

Russia has said that the first stage of talks would include members of both the government-tolerated internal opposition and opposition groups based abroad. In the next stage, they would be joined by Syrian government representatives.

But the Syrian government official was quoted as saying that "the preliminary, consultative meetings in Moscow are aimed at (finding) agreement on convening a dialogue conference between the Syrians themselves, without any foreign intervention."

It is unclear whether Syria's opposition leaders in exile or rebel leaders would attend a conference in a government-controlled part of the country—particularly one that only aims to create dialogue.

Snow, ice sweep Europe, stranding drivers

LONDON (AP)—Snow and icy weather swept through parts of Europe on Saturday, stranding drivers overnight and leaving thousands of homes without power in Britain.

Snow also covered parts of Switzerland and southwestern Germany, and more than 20 centimeters (nearly eight inches) of snow has fallen in higher parts of Germany's Black Forest.

Many motorists in Britain were forced to abandon their cars or were trapped in vehicles for hours after becoming snowed in. Dozens of people traveling from Sheffield to London spent the night in a church after their bus became stuck.

Parts of northern England saw 11 centimeters (4.3 inches) of snow. Western Power Distribution said 36,000 customers were without power, and another 69,000 had short interruptions to supplies. Staff worked through the night to reconnect customers, but thousands in the East Midlands region were still affected.

Liverpool's John Lennon Airport and Leeds Bradford International closed late Friday as workers cleared snow from the runways. The airports have reopened.

British weather forecasts predict more snow showers, mainly in the north, though the main threat would be ice on roads.

The snow was welcomed in the French Alps, which have seen hardly any since the start of the ski season. But with up to 60 centimeters (2 feet) predicted this weekend above 2,000 meters (yards) altitude, one of the busiest vacation weeks of the year looked more promising—if drivers could reach the mountains.

Traffic jams snarled many of France's major highways on Saturday, with more than three-quarters of the country under severe weather watch. Only 7,000 drivers of 36,000 expected were able to reach their destination in Savoie, one of the Alps regions, according to the Interior Ministry. Emergency shelters have been set up along the way for potentially thousands who are going to be forced to stay on the road overnight.

In the north, the port of Calais closed because of wind gusts.

Snow and ice led to a roughly 20-kilometer (12.5 mile) traffic jam on the A8 highway near Stuttgart in southern Germany.

Parts of Germany's south and west saw more than 10 centimeters (4 inches) of fresh snow, helping some ski areas which had been struggling.

Health & Fitness

Gift Guide: 5 fitness trackers offer wide range

By ANICK JESDANUN
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

AP
Fitness trackers, from left, Basis Peak, Adidas Fit Smart, Fitbit Charge, Sony SmartBand, and Jawbone Move, are posed for a photo next to an iPhone, Monday, Dec. 15, 2014, in New York.

NEW YORK (AP)—There are several fitness trackers to choose from, varying in what they measure and how easy they are to use. Here are five, ranked from budget to sophisticated, to give you a sense of the range available. By no means are these the only good offerings out there.

The basic ones are going to feel more like bracelets the width of a bandage. The last two resemble watches and have larger displays for advanced features, including heart-rate tracking. But they also may feel big on smaller hands.

■■■

Budget tracker: Jawbone Up Move ($50, or $65 with wristband, free app for iOS, Android):

This device feels cheap—because it is. The Move comes with a clip to attach to your waist, but you have to pay extra for a wristband, including a slim-width version for women. The wristband isn't easy to secure, but you can't beat the price.

You get most of the features available with pricier Up models. That includes basics such as steps and distance traveled, calories burned and sleep patterns. Last year's Up 24 ($130) is slimmer and more stylish, but I found the Move's performance to be about the same as the 24, at least when using the wristband. The upcoming Up 3 ($180) will also have a heart-rate monitor and additional sleep tracking.

With many of these fitness trackers, don't expect a high degree of accuracy. Because the Move and the 24 count steps based on arm movement, I got credited with a half-mile from heavy clapping during Act 2 of "The Nutcracker." They also logged a 5.5-mile run as more than eight miles. With a rival device, the Fitbit Charge, I also got extra credit for washing the dishes, even with my feet stationary. These devices are good for those new to fitness, but serious athletes will want more.

None of the Up models has a display, though the Move uses an odd system of blinking lights to show how far you are toward your goal.

■■■

Basic, but functional: Fitbit Charge ($130, free app for iOS, Android, Windows):

This device is for you if you're looking to do nothing. Well, you still need to get off the couch, but the device automatically counts your footsteps and rewards you for hitting various milestones. For instance, you get a virtual Penguin March badge once you hit 70 miles—the distance emperor penguins make annually to their breeding grounds. The Charge also automatically detects how long you sleep and looks for signs of restlessness during the night. Many other devices, including the Ups, require you to manually switch to night mode for this analysis.

The Charge doesn't go too far beyond the basics. But coming soon: a $150 Charge HR model will have heart-rate tracking, while a $250 Surge model will also have GPS for more accurate distance logging. The Surge will also offer music playback controls and text notifications, while all three show you who's trying to call you when paired with a nearby phone.

■■■

Phone companion: Sony SmartBand (starts at $100, free app for Android only):

Sony's fitness devices work with the company's Lifelog app, which is available only for Android.

The app isn't as clean or friendly as what you get with Jawbone or Fitbit, but it's great for those who are data hungry. The app tracks not only your fitness activities but also your phone interactions—not that you really need a reminder that you checked the weather at 1:01 p.m. Relive your day by pressing a "play" button. The stick figure starts walking or running, for instance, as the app scrolls through those parts of the day.

The SmartBand Talk ($170) lets you make calls from your wrist and see bits of texts and other message notifications that come to your phone. The regular SmartBand ($100) lacks calling and messages and has no display. Everything gets viewed on the app. Sleep analysis is automatic on the Talk.

■■■

More sophisticated: Basis Peak ($200, free app for iOS, Android):

Everything's automatic with the Peak, as with the Fitbit devices. A heart-rate monitor logs your pulse continually during exercise. Sensors even measure skin temperature and perspiration. The catch is the device needs to be snug around your wrist, or it won't work right.

The Peak skirts the distance-accuracy issue by showing only footsteps taken - not an estimated distance. My running pace is presented as steps per minute rather than the usual miles per minute. That information isn't very useful for me. Its app also annoys me in breaking up fitness activities into several segments whenever I take a short break - to cross the street, for instance.

But when I do find my various segments, I can get more details by tapping on the various charts and using my fingers to expand them. Apps for many other devices tend to me more limiting in what they present.

As with most consumer heart-rate monitors, readings will be off here and there. These devices are best used for tracking patterns over time.

The Peak tries to keep you motivated by rewarding you for habits such as getting eight hours of sleep at least twice a week. The Peak is supposed to offer message notifications, too, with a software update coming soon.

■■■

Personal coach: Adidas Fit Smart ($199, free app for iOS, Android):

Nothing's automatic with this device. You need to manually start and stop tracking— which makes it more accurate, but also more work on your part. Unfortunately, the interface is clunky, and everything seems to take more steps than necessary.

Distances were inaccurate at first, but the Fit Smart makes it easier than most to calibrate. I told the device what the distance of a given run should have been, and readings have been fairly reliable since then. It's also automatic if you do a 12-minute assessment workout while carrying your phone.

The power of the Fit Smart is in Adidas' free companion workout programs. You set that up through the miCoach app. With running, you enter your goals and the date of your upcoming race. The app's calendar then fills up with training runs and strengthening exercises to do. A voice coach will guide you on your pace if you run with your phone. Otherwise, data from the Fit Smart syncs with the app, which then tells you how well you did meeting targets.

California battles whooping cough epidemic

SAN DIEGO (AP)—California officials are battling the worst whooping cough epidemic to hit the state in seven decades as a recent rebound in cases raises questions about the effectiveness of the pertussis vaccine.

Doctors emphasize that the inoculation has led to fewer deaths than in the past and in instances where people do get sick, their illnesses aren't as severe. But California officials say the limited protection of the vaccine introduced in the 1990s has led to the rise in cases. Research has shown it doesn't last as long as the one it replaced, and a new study suggests the vaccine may not prevent the spread of the disease.

Whooping cough peaks every three to five years, and California's last epidemic was in 2010. But despite an aggressive public health campaign in response, the current outbreak is worse.

A total of 9,935 cases were reported to the California Department of Public Health from Jan. 1 to Nov. 26—the highest number in 70 years. The cases included one infant who died. Elementary, middle and high school outbreaks have occurred across the state.

The bacterial infection causes uncontrollable, violent coughing, which often makes it hard to breathe. People often take deep breaths which result in a "whooping" sound.

San Diego County is among the hardest hit areas with 1,819 cases reported so far this year.

"We'd have to go way back to the 1940s to find more cases," said Dr. Eric McDonald, medical director of the epidemiology and immunization branch for public health services in San Diego County.

That's when whooping cough was common, causing hundreds of thousands of illnesses annually and thousands of deaths. But after a vaccine was introduced in the 1940s, cases dropped to fewer than 5,000 a year.

That vaccine was replaced in the 1990s because of side effects, which included pain and swelling from the shot and fever. The newer vaccine is part of routine childhood vaccinations as well as adult booster shots.

Last year was the nation's worst year for whooping cough in six decades- U.S. health officials received reports of more than 48,000 cases, including 18 deaths. This year the number of reported cases nationwide dropped to about 20,000.

After the 2010 epidemic, California launched a campaign about the importance of rapid diagnosis and treatment, especially in young infants. The state also started providing free vaccines for children, pregnant and postpartum women.

Dr. Gil Chavez, epidemiologist with the California Department of Public Health, said while more people, especially pregnant women, need to get vaccinated, he does not believe low inoculation rates are the primary cause of the current epidemic: Of this year's pediatric cases that had information on the child's vaccination history, only 10 percent of those infected in 2014 had not been vaccinated against pertussis.

Chavez says the new vaccine's limitations and better tests have led to the increase in cases.

Cases are likely to continue going up as doctors do a better job at detecting the illness, officials say.

More than two years ago, Kathryn Riffenburg, who lives outside Boston, said doctors told her that her newborn son, Brady, likely had a cold. A week and a half later, she took him to the emergency room as he struggled to breathe.

By the time, he was diagnosed with pertussis it was too late to save the 2-month-old boy.

"It made us angry, because we felt more should have been done," said Riffenburg, who know advocates for pregnant women and anyone else in contact with infants to get vaccinated.

Life & Style

Will 'The Interview' change how Hollywood does business?

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"The Interview" was never supposed to be a paradigm-shifting film. But unusual doesn't even begin to describe the series of events that transpired over the past few weeks, culminating in the truly unprecedented move by a major studio to release a film in theaters and on digital platforms simultaneously.

Sony is in uncharted waters now with the film, which earned $1.04 million from 331 locations on Thursday, according to studio estimates, in addition to the untold VOD grosses.

"Considering the incredibly challenging circumstances, we are extremely grateful to the people all over the country who came out to experience "The Interview" on the first day of its unconventional release," said Rory Bruer, president of worldwide distribution for Sony Pictures in a statement.

For a film that would have just come and gone in the usual 3,000 theaters without much fanfare, the $40 million comedy has now become an accidental case study in the world of day-and-date releases, in which titles are available both in theaters and for digital rental simultaneously. The industry is watching closely to see just where audiences will choose to place their dollars in the coming days and weeks. The big question is whether or not this strategy could be viable for major releases in the future.

While a $3,142 per-theater average and sold-out showings when audiences had the option to watch the film from the comfort of their own homes is nothing to scoff at, analysts agree that it probably doesn't signal the beginning of a significant change in how Hollywood does business.

Day-and-date releases are nothing new, for one. Independent distributors have embraced this strategy for years. But those are generally small films with even smaller budgets-ones that can't afford a more traditional, widespread marketing campaign.

For the major studios, it's never really been an option.

Theater chains depend on exclusive first-run content to survive. If audiences were given the choice to just rent anything from a mid-budget comedy to a $200 million blockbuster on the day of its release, theaters would undoubtedly suffer.

"The last thing the major theater chains want is for this kind of strategy to be employed by the major studios on a more frequent basis," said BoxOfficeGuru.com editor Gitesh Pandya. Earlier this year, Warner Bros. experimented with an unconventional day-and-date release for "Veronica Mars." Theater chains Regal and Cinemark declined to screen the film because of its online availability. The film ended up showing on 270 screens, most of which were AMC.

AP

In this Dec. 25, 2014 file photo, Derek Karpel holds his ticket to a screening of "The Interview" at Cinema Village movie theater, in New York.

"The relationship between big studios and exhibitors is so monumental that they're not going to start changing things around anytime soon. Possibly down the road, little by little. But the old-school model of putting your major releases in 3,000 theaters nationwide will stay intact for the time being," Pandya said.

Paul Dergarabedian, a senior media analyst for box office tracker Rentrak, agreed. "Theatrical is the engine that drives everything else. I don't think this is a sudden gateway to studios wanting to release films this way," he said.

Also, "The Interview" is an imperfect case. Patriotism, free speech, pure curiosity and even the desire to be part of the nationwide conversation have all played in to why audiences flocked to theaters on Christmas Day to see the movie.

"Awareness is through the roof," Dergarabedian said. "People went out to the theaters and made an event out of it. They're going to be talking about this for a long time. That's a very interesting and unusual phenomenon that's usually reserved for films like `The Hobbit' or `Star Wars.' "

Added Pandya: "Audiences who would otherwise never go to see a Seth Rogen movie were hearing about it and decided to come out to see what all the fuss is about."

Long-term prospects for "The Interview" at the box office remain a mystery. Pandya believes that theatrical grosses will be frontloaded, and that's at least partially attributable to the quality of the film.

"The movie is mediocre," he said. "If it were a brilliant film, the word of mouth would carry it week to week." He predicts a dramatic drop off when the holidays end.

Also, the public may never know how the movie fared on the digital platforms. Smaller distributors like Radius-TWC, who released "Snowpiercer" on demand while it was still in theaters, have started pulling back the veil on VOD financials, but it's unlikely that Sony will ever give the public a peek into "The Interview's" success or failure online.

"I'm sure they're not that impressive. For studios, the biggest part of reporting box office is to brag," Pandya said. "If the numbers aren't brag-worthy, they're probably going to keep it in their own files."

"The Interview" might now forever be in the history books, but it probably won't change the way audiences see new movies. For the big movies, theatrical will always come first, Dergarabedian said.

"It's a system that works and audiences like it," he said.

N. Korea uses racial slur against Obama over hack

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea blamed its recent Internet outage on the United States on Saturday and hurled racially charged insults at President Barack Obama over the hacking row involving the movie "The Interview."

North Korea's powerful National Defense Commission, which is headed by country leader Kim Jong Un and is the nation's top governing body, said Obama was behind the release of the comedy that depicts Kim's assassination. The commission described the movie as illegal, dishonest and reactionary.

"Obama always goes reckless in words and deeds like a monkey in a tropical forest," an unidentified spokesman at the commission's Policy Department said in a statement carried by the country's official Korean Central News Agency.

The White House's National Security Council declined to comment Saturday.

North Korea has denied involvement in a crippling cyberattack on Sony Pictures but has expressed fury over the comedy. Sony Pictures initially called off the release of the film, citing threats of terror attacks against U.S. movie theaters. Obama criticized Sony's decision, and the movie opened this past week.

AP

This photo combination shows U.S. President Barack Obama, left, and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

It wasn't the first time North Korea has used crude insults against Obama and other top U.S. and South Korean officials. Earlier this year, North Korea called U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry a wolf with a "hideous" lantern jaw and South Korean President Park Geun-hye a prostitute. In May, the North's official news agency published a dispatch saying Obama has the "shape of a monkey."

A State Department spokeswoman at the time called the North Korean dispatch "offensive and ridiculous and absurd."

In the latest incident, the North Korean defense commission also blamed Washington for intermittent outages of North Korean websites this past week. The outages happened after Obama blamed the Sony hack on North Korea and promised to respond "in a place and time and manner that we choose."

The U.S. government has declined to say whether it was behind the Internet shutdown in North Korea.

According to the North Korean commission's spokesman, "the U.S., a big country, started disturbing the Internet operation of major media of the DPRK, not knowing shame like children playing tag." DPRK refers to the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The commission said the movie was the result of a hostile U.S. policy toward North Korea, and threatened the U.S. with unspecified consequences.

North Korea and the U.S. remain technically in a state of war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. The rivals also are locked in an international standoff over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and its alleged human rights abuses.

A United Nations commission accuses North Korea of a wide array of crimes against humanity, including murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment and rape.

The U.S. stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea as deterrence against North Korean aggression.

Associated Press writer Josh Lederman in Honolulu contributed to this story.

At 89, enigmatic Angela Lansbury is back in the 'Spirit'

By MIKE CIDONI LENNOX
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Angela Lansbury has moved yet again.

This time, home is the Ahmanson Theatre, where the 89-year-old Tony winner and honorary Oscar recipient has settled in for a six-week run of Noel Coward's comedy "Blithe Spirit."

This is Lansbury's third time around with Coward's 1941 farce, which is propelled by a medium who accidentally conjures the ghost of a writer's precocious wife. Lansbury played the clairvoyant Madame Arcati on Broadway in 2009. She reprised the role last spring on the West End.

Lansbury

Now, she's taking the character on the road for a four-city North American tour that began in Los Angeles Dec. 9.

"It's a role that I enjoy playing tremendously," Lansbury said in a recent interview, adding it was a no-brainer returning to a part "that really, really makes the audience sit up and say, `Oh my gosh, what is she doing now?'"

A passion for bicycling may be the only tie binding the eccentric Arcati and Lansbury's best-known character: the earthbound mystery writer-turned-sleuth Jessica Fletcher, whom the actress portrayed on the television series "Murder, She Wrote" from 1984-96.

"People say to me, `Well, how can you play Jessica Fletcher and then you come along and play Madame Arcati?'" Lansbury said. "I say, `It's all about imagination.' That's what acting is, is imagination. If you don't have imagination, you're not going to want to play different roles. I've always wanted to attack roles that didn't appear to be something I'd ever done before."

Lansbury added that, personally, she is "nowhere near" either character, "even though a lot of people would say, `Well, you must be like Jessica.' I'm probably closer to Jessica than I am to Arcati, because I'm a very ordinary person."

But she's had an extraordinary career, even if the actress herself occasionally begs to differ.

The London-born Lansbury was just 19 when her first film, "Gaslight," earned her an Oscar nomination. Nevertheless, precious-few A-titles and great screen roles would come her way for the next two decades. "I knew that Hollywood didn't know what to do with me," said the actress, who received two more Academy Award nominations before receiving an honorary statuette last year.

Even before putting movies on the back burner, she accepted offers to do plays in both London and New York, "but then I got into musical theater, and that opened up doors," Lansbury said. Her first was the original 1964 Stephen Sondheim-Arthur Laurents tuner "Anyone Can Whistle," which, after critical pans, closed following a mere nine performances. However, just two years later, Jerry Herman insisted on casting Lansbury in his new musical "Mame," which became a smash, and, at age 40, a Broadway baby was born. Of the actress's five Tonys, four are for musicals.

1990s TV star 'Screech' charged in bar stabbing

By KYLE POTTER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dustin Diamond, who played Screech on the 1990s TV show "Saved by the Bell," was charged Friday with stabbing a man during a bar fight on Christmas.

Diamond, 37, faces charges of felony second-degree recklessly endangering safety charge, disorderly conduct and carrying a concealed weapon.

According to the criminal complaint, Diamond told police that he and his fiancee went out to several bars Thursday night in Port Washington, about 30 miles north of Milwaukee. The couple, who lives in Port Washington, got into a tussle with two men and another woman at the Grand Avenue Saloon, the complaint said.

Port Washington police say they responded at 11:15 p.m. Thursday to a report of a stabbing at a bar. When police caught up with their SUV down the road from the bar, Diamond told police he had a "pen" in his hand when he grabbed one of the men, according to the complaint.

Port Washington police found in the car a switchblade, the point of which was covered in what appeared to be blood. Diamond later told police he accidentally stabbed the man while trying to defend his fiancee, according to the complaint.

The man had been stabbed under the armpit and police said he was not seriously injured.

Diamond appeared Friday afternoon in Ozaukee County court, where bail was set at $10,000. His next hearing is scheduled for Dec. 29. His fiancee, 27-year-old Amanda Schutz, also faces a disorderly conduct charge.

His agent declined comment Friday morning, and no attorney was listed in court records.

AP
This Friday, Dec. 26, 2014 booking photo provided by the Ozaukee County Sheriff shows Dustin Diamond.

Since his decade-long run at Bayside High, Diamond has been sued several times for delinquent taxes and in foreclosure proceedings for missing mortgage payments. He has appeared on reality TV shows, made a sex tape and most recently produced a tell-all documentary on Lifetime TV called "The Unauthorized Saved by the Bell Story."

Texas movie set used by John Wayne fading away

By MICHAEL GRACZYK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRACKETTVILLE, Texas (AP)—Time and Mother Nature are threatening to dismantle the Alamo. Not the original, but the replica 18th-century Spanish mission and Old West movie set John Wayne built for his Oscar-nominated 1960 movie and that for decades was a tourist mecca and film production site.

"It's not just something that represents history to a movie set—it is now history for sure," says Rich Curilla, the one-man curator and custodian of the now-closed Alamo Village.

Alamo Village, a 400-acre plot of land about 120 miles west of San Antonio, was carved out of a large ranch in the late 1950s for Wayne's directorial debut. Starring Richard Widmark as Jim Bowie and Wayne as Davy Crockett, "The Alamo" had an estimated $12 million budget, huge for its time.

The 4-foot-thick Alamo facade was modeled off a 1936 map of the historic building—drawn up for the Texas centennial that year—and set construction took nearly two years. Unlike the real Alamo, which is dwarfed by taller buildings in the heart of San Antonio, the view from Wayne's Alamo offered a panorama of iconic Texas and Western images.

"To Hollywood, a movie set is just a means to an end," said Curilla, a film and Alamo historian who spent his summers in college during the late 1960s at the site and began working there full-time in 1988. "I think Wayne was cognizant of building a monument and not just a movie set."

In its heyday, Wayne's Alamo hosted Jimmy Stewart, Dean Martin, Raquel Welch and even Willie Nelson. It's where James Arness reprised his famous Matt Dillon role in a "Gunsmoke" TV movie.

In all, nearly 40 major film and TV productions, plus hundreds of commercials, documentaries and music videos were shot at Alamo Village. And musical shows, comedy skits and staged gunfights drew hundreds of tourists daily.

"It was magical," said Penny Loewen, who was 18 in 1979 when she arrived from tiny St. Francisville, Illinois. She stayed for three years, getting paid $350 a month to sing and perform six days a week, 11 hours a day.

"We would do just about anything," the 55-year-old retired Nashville songwriter who remained involved with movie productions for 20 years said. "That was the most fun I ever had in my life."

Business at Alamo Village began to wane in the 1980s when traffic along the main east-west route through South Texas shifted north with completion of Interstate 10. It closed to the public after the last remaining owner died in 2009 and the property was divided among heirs. The land now primarily is used for cattle grazing and hunting.

In recent years, a large crack has developed on the front of the Alamo facade. A tree grows inside. Other walls and structures that have been replaced or redone are failing.

At the main entrance to the ranch, only an abandoned ticket booth and a weathered sign telling visitors they're entering the world's largest outdoor movie set hint at its storied past.

"The weather and elements are taking a toll on it," Texas Film Commission Director Heather Page said. "I think it would be disappointing to lose something like that."

Corpus Christi businessman David Jones, 74, envisions saving Alamo Village as a Texas version of Old Tucson, a thriving Old West theme park in southern Arizona.

Single mom wavers about cutting ties to absent dad

DEAR ABBY: I'm a single mom. My child's father has refused to take any responsibility since before the baby was born. I never cut ties because I'm sure my son will someday long for and want to know his real father.

Even though he renounced his responsibility, he took it back and said he'd try to be there for my child. We are geographically many miles apart, and I no longer expect or hope for any possibility of a reconciliation—which is fine. I just never wanted to seem like someone who has been dumped, so I reason that we're cool.

Abby, he never calls to ask how our child is. What should I do? Should I cut ties with him forever, or must I continue to be the one to message him informing him about the milestones? Should I keep this connection going or let it go?

CONFUSED SINGLE MOM, YOKOHAMA, JAPAN

DEAR CONFUSED: A man who "tries" to be responsible for his children pays at least token child support to ensure that they are fed, clothed and educated. Nowhere in your letter did you indicate that your child's father has done that—or intends to.

If you want to stay in touch so your child will have an address to reach him when he's older, I think that's laudable. But if you're expecting he will suddenly develop an interest—or a conscience —the pattern that has been set seems pretty well established, so don't get your hopes up.

DEAR ABBY: We're in the middle of a dispute with my mother-in-law. She insisted on using place cards at our family's Thanksgiving dinner to indicate where she wanted us to sit. I felt it was controlling because it was only a small group of people. When I asked her why she needed a seating plan, she said it would be "fun."

While it ended up that we all sat where we wanted and everyone conversed nicely, she said her holiday was "ruined" because I ridiculed her for wanting to use place cards. What is your opinion? Would you ask your immediate family to sit in their appointed chairs, or let everyone sit where they would like?

MUSICAL CHAIRS IN NEW ENGLAND

DEAR MUSICAL CHAIRS: One of the perks of hosting a sit-down dinner is having the privilege of controlling the seating, regardless of whether guests are friends or relatives. That it was a "family dinner" is beside the point. For you to have made such a scene that you ruined your hostess's evening was rude, and you owe her an apology.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

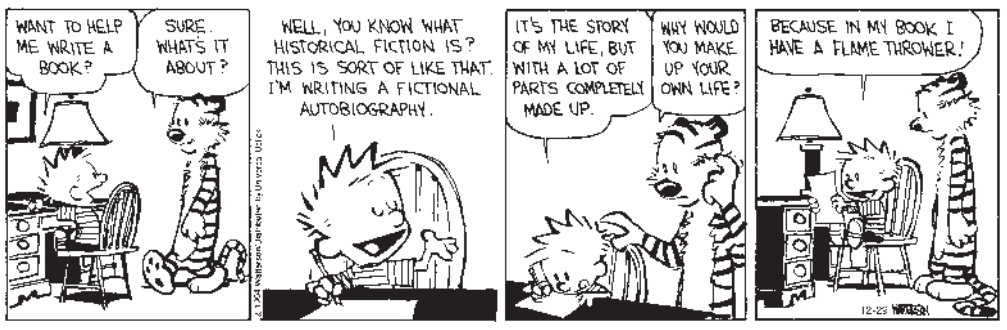
DEAR READERS: If you plan to be out celebrating New Year's Eve on Wednesday and plan to drink, PLEASE arrange for a designated driver to transport you. It could save your life or someone else's. The American Automobile Association in some —not all—communities offers a safe-ride program for members and nonmembers. To find out whether it's happening in your community, go online or call your local branch of the AAA.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


WANT TO HELP ME WRITE A BOOK?
SURE. WHAT'S IT ABOUT?
WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT HISTORICAL FICTION IS? THIS IS SORT OF LIKE THAT. I'M WRITING A FICTIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY.
IT'S THE STORY OF MY LIFE, BUT WITH A LOT OF PARTS COMPLETELY MADE UP.
WHY WOULD YOU MAKE UP YOUR OWN LIFE?
BECAUSE IN MY BOOK I HAVE A FLAME THROWER!

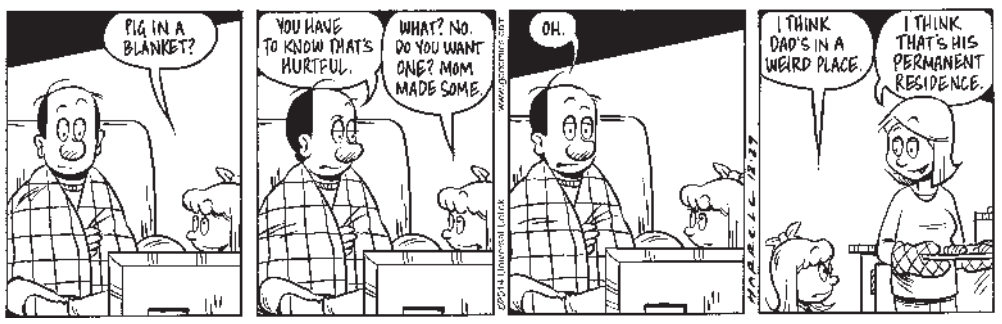
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

I GOT MY WIFE A TREADMILL FOR CHRISTMAS
THAT'S NICE
WHY ARE YOU STANDING OUT HERE IN THE SNOW?
I GOT MY WIFE A TREADMILL FOR CHRISTMAS

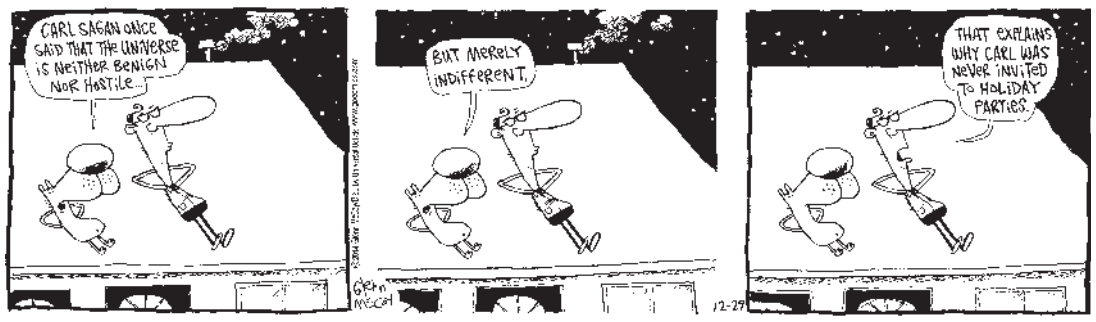
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


PIG IN A BLANKET?
YOU HAVE TO KNOW THAT'S HURTFUL.
WHAT? NO. DO YOU WANT ONE? MOM MADE SOME.
OH.
I THINK DAD'S IN A WEIRD PLACE.
I THINK THAT'S HIS PERMANENT RESIDENCE.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


CARL SAGAN ONCE SAID THAT THE UNIVERSE IS NEITHER BENIGN NOR HOSTILE...
BUT MERELY INDIFFERENT.
THAT EXPLAINS WHY CARL WAS NEVER INVITED TO HOLIDAY PARTIES.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Craze
4 Marry
7 Radiate
11 Thunderstruck
13 Mellow
14 Start over
15 Hideaway
16 Get dressed in
17 Helper
18 "I Love Lucy" co-star
20 Affix an autograph
22 Profit
24 Wild and crazy guy
28 Genie's master
32 Photog's directive
33 Titanic destroyer
34 "Wham!"
36 Initial stake
37 Intact
39 Combatant
41 Unisex top
43 "Help!"
44 Pita sandwich
46 Celebratory cry
50 Tied
53 Toss in
55 Egyptian cross
56 Promgoers' ride
57 Cow's comment
58 Entice
59 Manhandle
60 Paid player
61 Witnessed

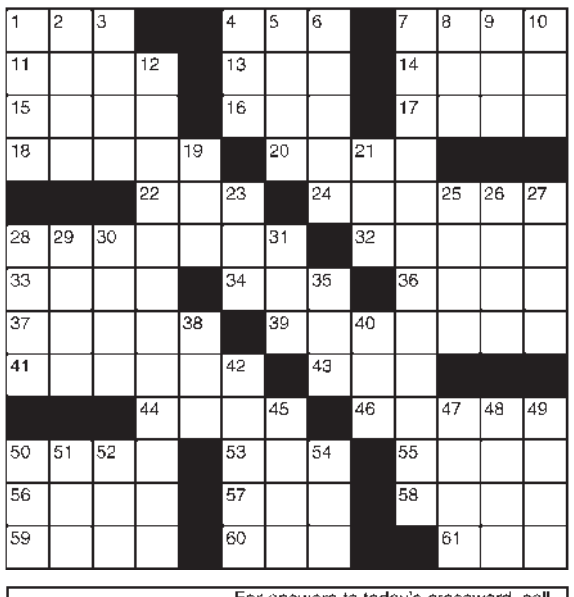
DOWN

1 FDR's dog
2 Culture medium
3 Slay
4 Bankroll
5 Hollywood clashers
6 Jeans fabric
7 Parade VIP
8 Hawaiian garland
9 Eccentric
10 Trouble
12 Gruesome form of theater
19 Londoner's last letter
21 Petrol
23 Gratuity
25 Short skirt
26 Choir member
27 — -do-well
28 Touch
29 Camera feature
30 Part of the foot
31 Present
35 Existed
38 Attempt
40 Line
42 Chaplin character
45 Smell
47 Burden
48 Gumbo ingredient
49 "That's a relief!"
50 Shade source
51 By way of
52 Flightless bird
54 "Cock-a-doodle-—!"

Solution time: 27 mins.

C	R	E	P	T		R	A	W		C	F	C
B	A	Y	O	J		U	S	A		H	I	E
S	P	E	L	L		P	I	N	B	A	_	L
		B	O	S	S	E	S		R	O	_	L
P	T	A		A	T	E		R	I	S	E	S
I	C	L	A		A	S	K	E	D			
G	O	I	D	F	N		A	D	A	G	I	O
			V	A	D	E	R		L	U	_	L
A	S	S	E	T		V	E	T		M	O	D
D	E	E	R		B	E	N	U	M	B		
O	D	D	B	A	L	L		L	E	A	R	N
B	A	G		D	E	Y		I	G	L	O	O
E	N	E		O	W	N		P	A	L	E	D

Friday's answer 12-29



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18– only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Alison Brie, 32; Jude Law, 42; Patricia Clarkson, 55; Ted Danson, 67.

Happy Birthday: Accept the inevitable and maintain balance and equality in your dealings. This year your undivided attention will be required if you want to maintain your status quo. Opportunities will come from past connections or affiliations, and taking action to protect your investments and your health will be left solely up to you. Don't neglect your personal needs. Your numbers are 7, 13, 21, 23, 32, 36, 42.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Be careful how you handle work-related matters. Someone will be watching what you do. Stay calm and focus on taking charge and doing what needs to be done. Don't let anyone manipulate you emotionally. Negotiate fairly, but shrewdly. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Set your standards and share your thoughts. You will attract interest but also competition. Keep your emotions in check and don't take chances that may cost you your reputation or your position. Be smart, practical and in control. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Take care of responsibilities before going out with friends. Good fortune can be yours if you gather facts before making a move. You can get ahead if you go about it the right way. Favors will be granted. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Don't feel you have to make a drastic change because someone puts pressure on you. Bide your time and consider all your options. You'll come up with an alternate way to move forward if you think outside the box. ✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Head to where the action is and you will end up as the center of attention. Let your dynamic personality explore and present a vivid account of some of the ideas and plans you want to pursue in the new year. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Socialize with your peers and you will make headway that can lead to a higher income, but don't be too quick to commit or sign a contract. Hedge your bets and choose your moment to make your move based on the best deal. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Handle personal matters carefully. Someone will draw an emotional rise out of you that could alter the way you live. You may not like what happens initially, but in the end, the benefits will be plentiful. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Proceed with caution when dealing with peers. Meetings can go either way depending on how you handle questions. Don't let your emotions take over or allow anger to get the better of you. Keep things in perspective and opt to listen and observe. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Check out something new and research information rather than taking someone's word because they speak with authority. Fixing up your home or preparing for New Year's festivities is favored as long as you don't overspend. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Say little and do a lot. You will face complaints and mustn't let what others do or say affect your productivity. Invest in yourself and your future, not in what someone else wants you to do. Attention can alleviate a disgruntled partner. ✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You'll have some great ideas to put into play. An interesting job opportunity is apparent, but may require a partner in order to get things off the ground. A change in the way you live will turn out to be beneficial. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): What you do to help others will add to your popularity, but don't let anyone take advantage of you or what you have to offer. Taking on responsibilities must not stop you from getting ahead or doing what's best for you. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are a go-getter. You are relentless, unpredictable and quick to act.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

3			9		8		4	5
8		2			1	9		
	1			3			6	
6	4							9
		5		4		6		
1							7	4
	8			7			2	
		9	8			7		6
4	6		3		2			8

Difficulty Level ★ 12/29

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's SUDOKU Answer

5	4	6	8	7	3	1	2	9
8	7	2	1	9	4	5	6	3
9	1	3	2	6	5	7	8	4
1	9	4	6	5	2	3	7	8
2	5	8	7	3	1	9	4	6
3	6	7	4	8	9	2	5	1
6	8	5	9	1	7	4	3	2
4	3	9	5	2	8	6	1	7
7	2	1	3	4	6	8	9	5

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

TORONTO'S NEW MAYOR, JOHN TORY Solution: 11 letters

A	T	P	Y	S	L	A	O	G	E	O	R	G	E	Y
M	C	T	R	R	P	B	R	F	O	R	D	D	T	B
E	I	H	E	A	E	L	A	W	Y	E	R	N	A	A
C	N	N	I	K	C	D	E	O	A	A	I	L	D	R
O	H	D	I	E	C	T	R	D	W	U	L	S	I	B
N	Y	R	O	S	V	A	I	O	G	O	L	D	D	A
O	B	R	I	R	T	E	H	C	T	E	A	R	N	R
M	R	U	O	S	S	E	M	S	E	V	I	A	A	A
Y	F	O	S	T	T	E	R	E	I	D	C	W	C	C
V	C	T	I	I	T	O	M	S	N	C	E	A	R	T
O	A	P	S	R	N	W	P	E	T	T	P	I	O	I
T	B	T	O	N	A	E	O	H	N	R	S	D	G	V
E	E	I	A	L	H	T	S	H	E	T	A	E	E	I
S	N	L	L	R	L	O	N	S	C	R	S	M	R	S
C	P	U	B	L	I	C	J	O	N	A	S	U	S	T

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Last Friday's Answer: Collagen

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and (670) 287-4812 (cell)

PRO SE

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN
MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of:	)	FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 14-0511
Minor Child's Initial/ (d.o.b.) SCK (6/21/05), JCCK (5/19/07), JLCK (4/19/05), CWCK (8/02/10)	)	NOTICE OF HEARING
By: Florence S. Calvo (Mother)	)	
Petitioner	)	

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on January 15, 2015, at 10:30 a.m. in Courtroom 205A, before Honorable Kenneth L. Govendo.

Dated this 5th day of December, 2014.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
/s/
By: Deputy Clerk of Court

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DAY & NIGHT

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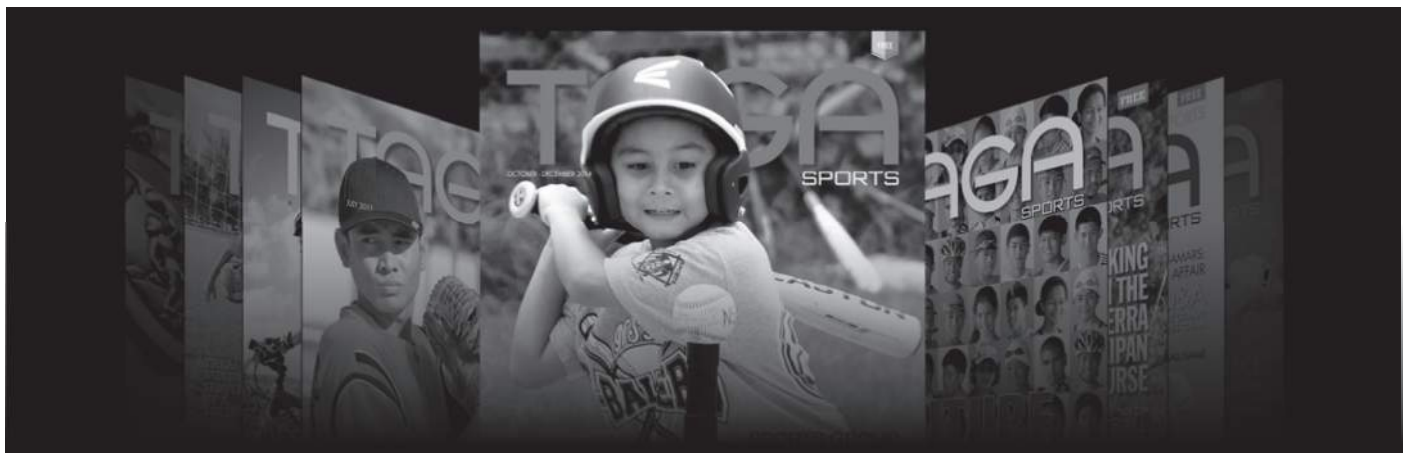

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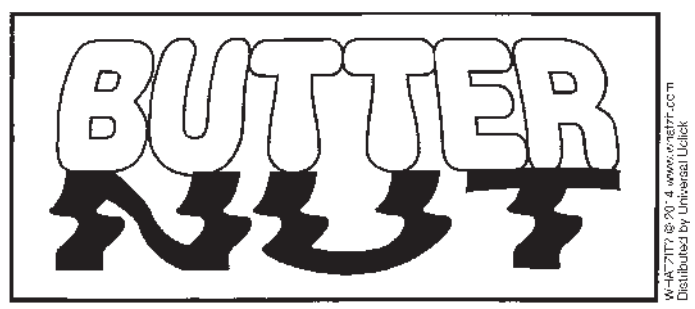

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Romo, Cowboys not backing off vs Redskins

IRVING, Texas (AP)—Tony Romo hasn't made it through his past two games against Washington without a back injury, and the most realistic playoff scenarios don't require the Cowboys to beat the Redskins on Sunday.

So what does that mean for the 34-year-old quarterback who has actually had three back problems in less than two years? Not much.

"I go in with the exact same mental approach I do every game," Romo said. "If you're a football player and there's a game, there's only one way to play and it's hard the whole time. You go all out. I think you're doing a disservice to the game and your team if you don't play that way."

Besides, the only inexplicable loss this season for NFC East champion Dallas (11-4) came against a Washington team already going nowhere in October. Granted, the Cowboys were without Romo for about a quarter in the second half after taking a direct hit to his surgically repaired back on a sack by linebacker Keenan Robinson.

But they still couldn't get key stops against third-string quarterback Colt McCoy, who started in place of ineffective backup Kirk Cousins while Robert Griffin III was still sidelined with a dislocated ankle. The 20-17 loss in overtime snapped Dallas' six-game winning streak.

"Everyone knows what happened last time," defensive lineman Tyrone Crawford said. "That's not a feeling that we like around here. So we don't want it to happen again."

The earlier win means the Redskins (4-11) can break even in the division in an otherwise dismal first season under coach Jay Gruden. Plus, Washington is coming off a 27-24 upset of Philadelphia that put the Cowboys in position to knock the Eagles out of the playoffs, which they did the next day by beating Indianapolis.

"It would give us a chance to finish 3-3 in our division and sweep the Cowboys, which our fans love," Griffin said. "It's Dallas week. We understand that. They're playing at a very high level right now."

In his last visit to Washington, Romo finished a winning rally last December after sustaining a herniated disk earlier in the game. He had surgery five days later and missed a season-ending loss to Philadelphia that extended the Cowboys' playoff drought to four years.

After his latest back injury against the Redskins - best described as two small fractures - Romo missed a loss to Arizona and clearly had a difficult time with the quick Thanksgiving turnaround a few weeks later in a loss to the Eagles. They've put together three strong performances since then, another reason to try to keep it going.

"It really comes down to just being the best version of yourself regardless of circumstance," Romo said. "These are great games to go show that. In the playoffs, not in the playoffs, it doesn't matter."

And for the Redskins, it's a matter of showing something heading into the offseason in a string of disappointing years interrupted only by a playoff team that beat the Cowboys in a winner-take-all finale two years ago.

"Winning the last two games against two quality opponents would be the next best thing other than going to the playoffs," Gruden said. "Nobody likes being in the situation we're in, but to finish strong and show the type of guys we have on this team, the way they're still competing despite not going to the playoffs, I think is a great tribute to them."

AP

In this Dec. 14, 2014, file photo, Dallas Cowboys' Tony Romo gestures during the second half of an NFL football game against the Philadelphia Eagles in Philadelphia. Rather than plummet despite an undertalented defense and questionable coaching, Dallas has surged to the NFC East title, possibly a first-round playoff bye.

Kuroda to return to Japan, pitch for Carps

TOKYO (AP)—Japanese media are reporting that Hiroki Kuroda, a free agent with the Yankees, will return to Japan in 2015 to pitch for the Hiroshima Carps.

Japanese broadcaster NHK and other reports said Saturday that the right-hander will wear the same number 15 that he wore for the Yankees. The Hiroshima team kept the number open for him for the eight years he was away, awaiting his return.

The reports say the 39-year-old Kuroda has signed a one-year contract worth 400 million yen ($3.3 million). Kuroda pitched for Hiroshima from 1997-2007, and then spent four years with the Dodgers before moving to New York.

In the last season he was 11-9 with a 3.71 ERA. While with the Major League, he was 79-79 with a 3.45 ERA in 1,319 career innings.

Meanwhile, the Washington Nationals have agreed to terms with second baseman Dan Uggla for a minor league deal with an invitation to major league spring training.

The Nationals also announced similar deals Friday with reliever Heath Bell, third baseman Ian Stewart, first baseman Clint Robinson and right-handed pitchers Scott McGregor and Mitch Lively.

Uggla played in four games with San Francisco this year after being cut by Atlanta after the All-Star break. The 34-year-old Uggla finished the year batting .194. The Braves still owe him $13 million for 2015.

The 37-year-old Bell has 168 career saves. The three-time All-Star closer was released by Tampa Bay in May 4 after he posted a 7.27 ERA in 13 appearances. He later signed a minor league deal with the New York Yankees.

SIDEBAR

Browns suspend Josh Gordon, Manziel late

CLEVELAND (AP)—Josh Gordon will end his troubled season just as it began—suspended.

The Browns' enigmatic wide receiver was suspended Saturday for missing a team walk-through and will miss the finale in Baltimore. Gordon, who led the NFL in yards receiving last season, served a 10-game suspension for repeated drug violations earlier this year.

A person familiar with the situation said Gordon was suspended for not showing up at a walk-through in Berea before the team flew to Baltimore. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the team has not disclosed the reason for Gordon's punishment.

Gordon's absence wasn't the only issue for the Browns.

Rookie quarterback Johnny Manziel was late for medical treatment on his injured hamstring, the person said. The Browns typically fine any player who is tardy for meetings or treatment on injuries. Manziel was placed on injured reserve this week after making two starts. The former Heisman Trophy winner is with the team for the season's final game.

Earlier this week, Manziel acknowledged he should have worked harder during his first NFL season.

"I'm not the Johnny Manziel that came in here a year ago," he said. "It's been a year of growing up for me. This is a job for me now. I have to take this a lot more seriously than maybe I did at first still going home and doing whatever I was doing in the offseason."

The Browns issued a statement about Gordon's suspension, but did not mention Manziel, whose unapologetic stance about his offseason partying raised questions about his commitment. Manziel said this week he wants to be "the guy" for the Browns, who traded up in the first round to select him in May's draft.

Manziel didn't show much on the field during his brief playing time, and the Browns have to wonder if he can stabilize a problematic position.

The Browns (7-8), who were contending for a playoff spot before losing four straight, will start rookie quarterback Connor Shaw on Sunday against the Ravens. Shaw was elevated from the practice squad Saturday. He will be Cleveland's 22nd starting quarterback since 1999.

Gordon's latest misstep has put his future with the Browns in jeopardy.

He amassed 1,646 yards receiving last season despite being suspended for the first two games for violating the league's substance abuse policy. He claimed he failed the drug test for a codeine-laced prescription cough medicine.

Since returning from his league ban this year, Gordon had caught 24 passes for 303 yards. But he also ran the wrong pass routes for former starter Brian Hoyer, who was benched in favor of Manziel. Coach Mike Pettine said Gordon needed to work harder on some plays, and the former Pro Bowler was less accessible to the media.

When he returned from his suspension earlier this season, the 23-year-old Gordon talked about wanting to make things up to the teammates who stood by him. He caught eight passes for 120 yards on Nov. 23 in his first game back against Atlanta and followed that up with seven catches for 75 yards in a loss at Buffalo.

But Gordon, whose drug suspension this year was for marijuana, has caught just nine passes in the past three games, and he has no touchdowns after scoring nine last season.

After he returned last month, Gordon said he was committed to helping the Browns win.

"I just want to control what I can control, and that's playing my hardest and working my hardest, 16 weeks next season and these last six games this season, however long I'm in Cleveland," he said. "That's just what I want to do."

He hasn't lived up to his promise.

And now the Browns may have reached a breaking point with him. They provided support for Gordon during his suspension and hoped that he would mature and fulfill his potential.

Because he didn't reach six games, Gordon will not be able to count this season toward free agency. He won't be eligible for unrestricted free agency when his current contract runs out after the 2015 season.

Raptors snap Clippers' 8-game win streak

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kyle Lowry and the short-handed Toronto Raptors needed plenty of help from their reserves down the stretch to beat the Los Angeles Clippers.

Lowry scored 25 points and the resilient Raptors got 18 of their 30 fourth-quarter points from the bench on Saturday, a 110-98 victory that ended the Clippers eight-game home winning streak.

"That's the biggest thing about this team. We've got a great bench and we feed off of each other," backup guard Greivis Vasquez said. "It may not show in the stats, but a lot of different guys do a lot of different things. The second (unit) doesn't get as much credit as the starters, but we don't care."

Jonas Valanciunas had 22 points and 11 rebounds for the defending Atlantic Division champion Raptors, who entered the day with a one-game lead over Atlanta for the best record in the Eastern Conference. Toronto was coming off a four-day break following Monday's 129-120 loss at Chicago, which ended a six-game winning streak.

The Clippers' Blake Griffin picked up his third foul and was replaced by Hedo Turkoglu with 10:50 left in the game. Vasquez responded with a pair of 3-pointers and a 17-footer during a 1:18 span to increase Toronto's five-point lead to 93-80 with 9:03 to play.

"It felt like we ran out of gas before the game even started," said Clippers point guard Chris Paul, who had 10 points and eight assists.

Griffin reported back in with 7:19 remaining and the Clippers down 95-82, but they got no closer than 12.

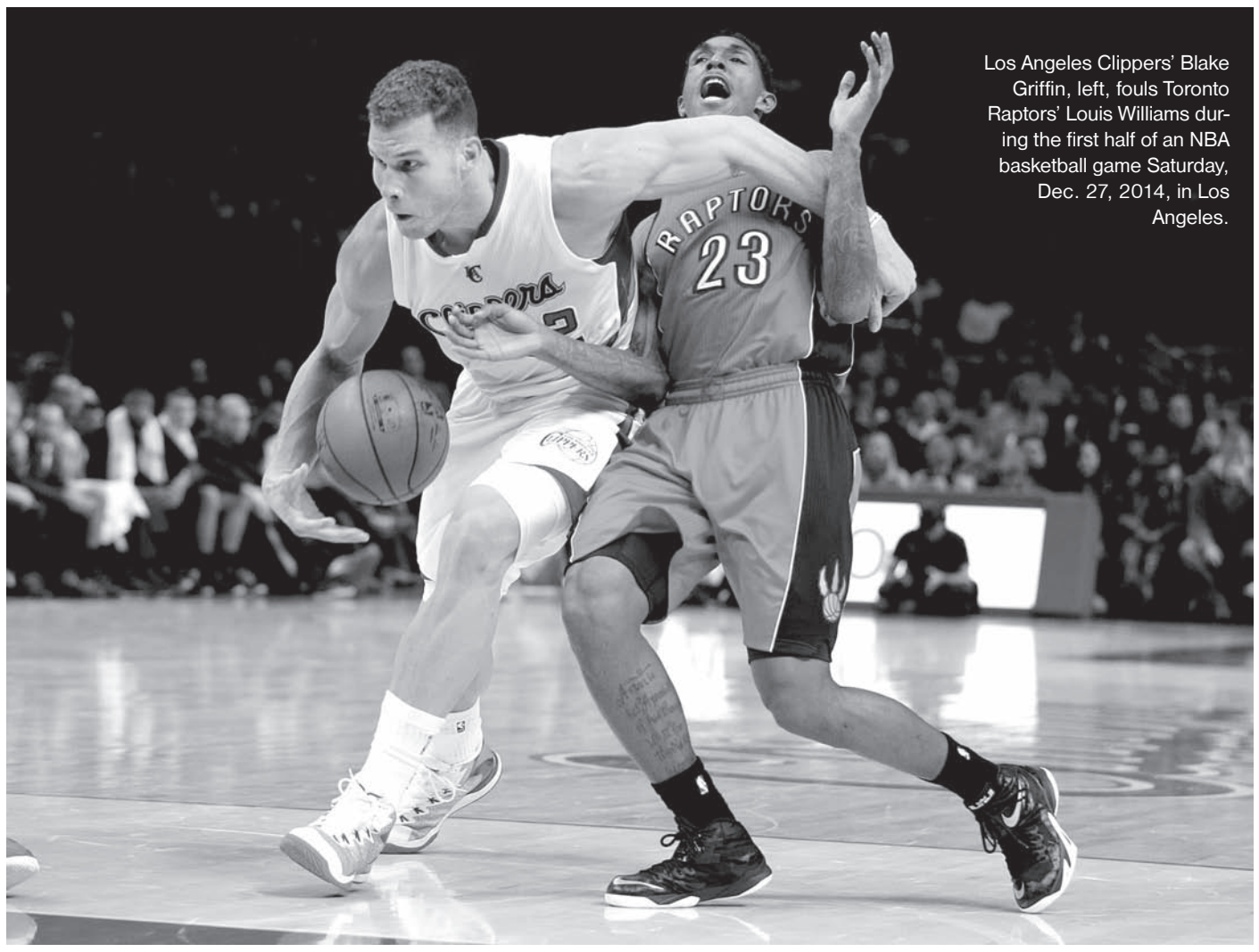
Lowry shot 9 of 17, after averaging 9.3 points and 27.5 percent from the field over his previous four games against the Clippers. DeMar DeRozan, the Raptors' second-leading scorer, missed his 14th straight game because of a torn muscle in his left groin. Landry Fields was sidelined for the third game in a row with a concussion.

"We're a full team. I mean, we need DeMar back, we want him back and we can't wait for him to get back. But for now, we can't make excuses because DeMar's not playing," Lowry said. "It's all about the next man up. We're a very deep team."

J.J. Redick had 23 points and Griffin had 22 but it wasn't enough as the Clippers lost at home for the first time since Chicago beat them on Nov. 17. Jamal Crawford added 20 off the bench, DeAndre Jordan grabbed 20 rebounds.

"Anytime you're playing against a team coming off a four-day rest, the second half is going to be the toughest challenge," Griffin said. "They came out in the second half and looked like they were fresh, and I didn't think we responded well."

The Raptors, who came in averaging 17.3 points off turnovers, converted 11 Clippers turnovers into 17 points during the first half and pulled into a 49-all tie at intermission after trailing by as many as eight.



Los Angeles Clippers' Blake Griffin, left, fouls Toronto Raptors' Louis Williams during the first half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Dec. 27, 2014, in Los Angeles.

Bulls 107, Pelicans 100

In Chicago, Jimmy Butler scored 33 points, Derrick Rose had 19 and Chicago beat New Orleans for its sixth consecutive victory.

The Bulls (21-9) also had three reserves score in double figures in their ninth win in 10 games. Aaron Brooks scored 13 points, and Taj Gibson added 12 points and 10 rebounds. Nikola Mirotic finished with 10 points.

Anthony Davis had 29 points, 11 rebounds and six blocked shots in his first NBA game in his hometown. Tyreke Evans scored 26 points for the Pelicans, and Jrue Holiday had 19 points and seven assists.

The Pelicans (15-15), who were coming off a 97-90 victory over San Antonio on Friday night, were outrebounded 45-37 by the Bulls.

Grizzlies 103, Heat 95

In Miami, Mike Conley scored 24 points, Marc Gasol added 22 points and 10 rebounds, and Memphis never trailed on the way to beating Miami.

Beno Udrih scored 11 for the Grizzlies, who led by 19 early in the second half before Miami scored to get within one or two points on 11 different occasions in the final minutes.

But the Grizzlies always had an answer, putting six players in double figures and snapping a four-game losing streak.

Dwyane Wade scored 25 points for Miami, which fell to 6-11 at home. Danny Granger scored a season-high 18 off the bench for the Heat, who got 16 from Luol Deng and 13 from Chris Andersen.

Magic 102, Hornets 94

In Charlotte, Nikola Vucevic had 22 points and 11 rebounds, Tobias Harris scored 21 points and Orlando overcame a career-high 42 points from Kemba Walker to beat Charlotte.

Walker scored a Charlotte-record 35 in the second half and finished 15 of 30 in the highest-scoring game of his career, but the Hornets could never regain the lead after falling behind by 10 at halftime.

Victor Oladipo scored 13 points, Evan Fournier had 12, and Ben Gordon and Elfrid Payton each had 11 for the Magic (12-21).

The Magic have defeated the Hornets (10-21) twice in Charlotte this season. Earlier this year they erased a 23-point deficit to win.

Wizards 101, Celtics 88

In Washington, Kris Humphries scored 18 points, Paul Pierce had 17 and Washington beat Boston.

It was the Wizards' eighth win in their last 10 games, and it was decided quickly. Washington scored 13 consecutive points to take a 15-2 lead with not even 4 minutes gone.

Jeff Green scored 23 points for Boston, which has lost four straight.

By the time the Celtics' nightmare first quarter ended, they were behind 30-12 and outrebounded by 16-6 and had eight turnovers.

Pacers 110, Nets 85

In New York, Rodney Stuckey scored 20 points, David West added 17, and Indiana overwhelmed Brooklyn.

Former Nets guard C.J. Watson, who played for Brooklyn during the 2012-13 season, came off the bench and scored 17 points. Luis Scola added 13, Chris Copeland had 12 and Lavoy Allen chipped in 10.

Jarrett Jack had 22 points and Joe Johnson added 18 for Brooklyn, which had won its previous three games. The Nets, who entered the night 12-2 against teams with losing records, couldn't handle the Pacers, who improved to 11-20.

Indiana's bench, third-best in the league with 39.6 points entering the game, outscored its Brooklyn counterparts 52-16.

Hawks 90, Bucks 85

In Milwaukee, Jeff Teague scored 10 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, Al Horford added 20, and Atlanta beat Milwaukee.

The Hawks avenged a 30-point loss to Milwaukee on Friday in Atlanta with their 15th win in their last 17 games. Paul Millsap finished with 17 points and eight rebounds for Atlanta.

Khris Middleton led Milwaukee with 21 points, which tied a season high, and O.J. Mayo added 11. Jared Dudley, who made NBA history on Friday by hitting all 10 of his shots, including four 4-pointers, shot just 3 of 8 for nine points.

Jazz 88, 76ers 71

In Salt Lake City, Derrick Favors had 17 points, 15 rebounds and five blocked shots to lead Utah over Philadelphia.

Trey Burke added 17 points, Gordon Hayward chipped in 15 and Enes Kanter finished with 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Jazz (10-20).

Tony Wroten scored 20 points and Robert Covington added 17 for the Sixers (4-25), who could not overcome a sluggish offensive performance before halftime.

The Jazz limited the Sixers to just 12-of-40 shooting (30 percent) from the field before halftime. Michael Carter-Williams particularly struggled, shooting just 1 of 13 in the first two quarters. He finished the game just 2 of 20.

Kings 135, Knicks 129, OT

In Sacramento, DeMarcus Cousins scored nine of his season-high 39 points in overtime in his return from a stomach ailment, and Sacramento handed New York its seventh straight loss.

Rudy Gay scored 29 points and Darren Collison added 27 points, 10 assists and a tiebreaking 3-pointer late in overtime for the slumping Kings. Sacramento had lost seven of its previous eight games, including four of five under interim coach Tyrone Corbin. But a matchup with the NBA's second-worst team helped reverse that slide.

Carmelo Anthony scored 36 points for the short-handed Knicks, who dressed only nine players in losing for the 17th time in 18 games.

Warriors 110, Timberwolves 97

In Oakland, Stephen Curry had 25 points and six assists, Klay Thompson scored 21 points and Golden State shook off a two-game losing streak by rolling past lowly Minnesota.

Four others scored in double digits as the NBA-leading Warriors (24-5) wore down the last-place Timberwolves in the second half. Golden State led by 27 points early in the fourth quarter and rested many of its regulars in the final minutes.

Thaddeus Young finished with 17 points and six rebounds, and Zach LaVine had 12 points and 14 assists in Minnesota's eighth straight loss. The injury-ravaged Wolves (5-24) are in last place in the Western Conference.

SIDEBAR

Rubio could return to Timberwolves in 2-3 weeks

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP)—The Minnesota Timberwolves expect point guard Ricky Rubio to return from his severe ankle injury in mid-January, a league source said.

Rubio has missed 24 games with a severely sprained left ankle he suffered on Nov. 7 at Orlando. He took part in three-quarter speed running exercises and shooting drills on the floor at Oracle Arena prior to the T'wolves' game against the Golden State Warriors on Saturday night. If an upcoming MRI shows his ankle is healing according to schedule, he could participate in contract drills next week.

"I am trying to do my best," Rubio said. "Sometimes it is a little bit painful. I got to get through that. Some things are mentally [challenging]. I just push myself and try to come back as soon as a I can."

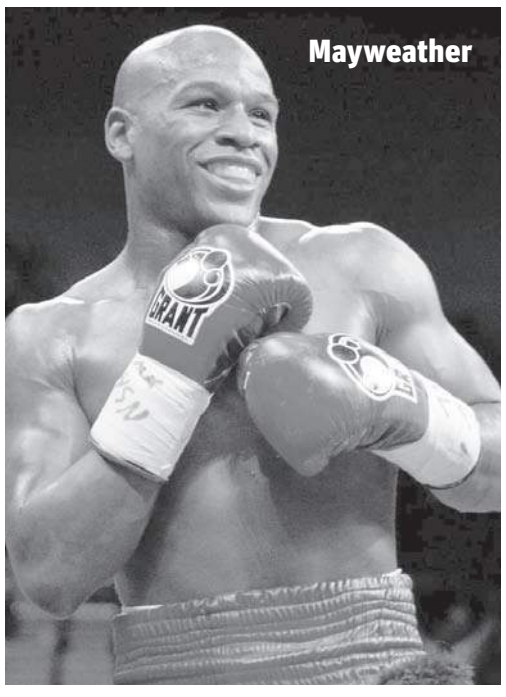
For now, Rubio has had trouble stopping and starting and changing direction when running.

Minnesota is currently without three starters in Rubio, guard Kevin Martin (wrist) and center Nikola Pekovic (foot, wrist) because of injuries. The T'wolves are starting rookies Andrew Wiggins and Zach LaVine.

"It's painful seeing them struggling some games," said Rubio, who averaged 9.4 points, 10 assists and 5.6 rebounds in five games this season. "But we're young. …We didn't know that three of our best players would go down. It's hard when 20-, 19-year-old kids have to take 40 minutes a game.

"It's a process. They have to learn. Being a rookie is hard. Being a rookie playing 40 minutes a game is even harder. It's tough to adapt to the league."

Pacquiao-Mayweather May 2 mega fight nixed



BOXING

Floyd Mayweather, Jr. wants to finally fight Manny Pacquiao on May 2 of 2015. Pacquiao's Hall of Fame trainer, Freddie Roach, also believes May 2 is the best date for the fight.

"It needs to happen for both guys," Roach said in a recent interview, throwing his support behind the May 2 date, the next open slot on Mayweather's calendar in his six-fight, $200 million deal with pay cable network Showtime. "I think we waited long enough."

But surprise, surprise — there's already an issue with that date. The objection comes from Pacquiao's own promoter, the veteran boxing impresario, Bob Arum. It seems that Arum, who also promoted Mayweather for the first 10 years of the pound-for-pound king's career, feels that the May 2 date should be reserved for Mexican fighters only.

"May 2, that Cinco De Mayo weekend, is a Mexican holiday. It is a big Mexican-American holiday. It's a fight date being talked about for Mayweather, Pacquiao, even Cotto, but they're not Mexicans or even Mexican-Americans," Arum told Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper in a recent interview. "The only Mexican who is a draw on that date is Canelo."

"Canelo," of course, is the top Mexican fighter of the moment. Another is 24-year-old junior middleweight Saul Alvarez, who fought Mayweather in September of 2013 — and suffered a one-sided decision loss.

But Arum has made no secret of his desire to match another of the top fighters in his stable, Miguel Cotto, against Alvarez in what would be a Mexico vs. Puerto Rico showdown on a May 2 "Cinco de Mayo" card.

Cinco de Mayo, which as the name states in Spanish actually falls on May 5, is an important holiday for Mexican-Americans, perhaps moreso than in Mexico itself. The date marks the against-all-odds triumph of the Mexican Army over the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1862.

But for Mexican-Americans, the date is primarily seen as a celebration of their ethnic pride.

That's why Arum says the date should be reserved for a Mexican fighter. But the fact that Cotto, the likely opponent for Alvarez on that date, fights for Bob Arum's Top Rank Promotions may have something to do with his thinking as well.

The fact that Pacquiao is signed to a contract with HBO, as is Alvarez, and Mayweather fights exclusively on Showtime under his current deal, is almost certainly a factor as well.

Would Bob Arum be willing nonetheless to co-promote a Manny Pacquiao vs. Floyd Mayweather, Jr. fight on May 2 anyway, given the record revenues the fight is all but certain to generate? Right now, the answer appears to be "no," meaning that boxing fans may have to wait until September of next year to witness the long-awaited mega-fight — if it ever happens at all.

Tryouts for Pacific Games canoe team begins

PORT MORESBY 2015 XV PACIFIC GAMES PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The open tryouts for the men's national outrigger canoe team begin tomorrow at 5:30am at Kilili Beach right across from the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium in Oleai.

The tryouts, sanctioned by the Northern Marianas National Paddle Sport Federation, will be held every Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays until Jan. 10. The time and venue stay the same.

For now, the NMNPSF will be sending a men's team to the 2015 Pacific Games set from July 4 to 18 in Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. The federation is still considering a women's team.

Those eligible for the tryout, based on the Pacific Games charter, must be citizen of the country they will be representing and have resided for not less than five years, cumulatively.

Interested individuals will meet at Kilili Beach and paddle in the water across the beach. Objective-based criteria and methods approved by NMNPSF will be used to make sure of a fair selection of the members of the team.

Selection is based on the performances of all candidates in endurance, strength, and timed events, respectively, as well as experience, leadership, attitude, and attendance.

Last year, head coaches Justin Andrews and Dana Okano conducted the open tryouts for the 2014 Micronesian Games held last July in Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia.

The CNMI men's team won the gold medal in the 1,500-meter event in the 2014 Micro Games. ***(Jon Perez)***

THE KASELEHLIE PRESS

Teams race in the 2014 Micronesian Games in Pohnpei in July. Next year, paddlers will compete in the 2015 Pacific Games in Papua New Guinea and the Northern Marianas National Paddle Sport Federation is holding a series of tryouts starting tomorrow to select the CNMI's representatives to the quadrennial competition.

TEAM

From Page 28

north, completing the 13.7-mile long race (22 kilometers) from the Pacific Islands Club-Saipan in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi in 1:32:24.

Team Usagi, which means rabbit in Japanese, was more than 6 minutes slower than last year's winners Road Runners (1:26:50) composed of Eda, Kabiriel, Ichiou, Manny Aaron and Jessie James. Team Usagi's time, however, was four minutes faster than the 1:36:35 recorded by Shane & The Cool Guys of Ronald Villafria, Shane Fabiana, Nonie Eugenio, and Charlie Sendin in 2012.

Team Dark Horse, composed of Get Fit CNMI members led by Shane "Pikaboo" Alvarez and Vince "The Clinch" Masga, was 4 minutes and 6 seconds behind Usagi as they crossed the finish line in 1:36:18.

Team Swoldiers, which literally means someone who is strong physically and mentally in the urban dictionary and was one of the four squads supported by the US Army Reserve, came in third at 1:39:48.

For Chris, Candy Cane Crushers, and Last Minute were the other Army Reserve teams and they were composed of soldiers of the 302nd Quartermaster Company, DET 1 and 100th Battalion, and family, and guests.

Team For Chris, with Joseph Villacrusis as team captain, finished eighth overall (1:59:06), Candy Cane Crushers—wearing red-colored, knee-high socks—came in 10th at 2:20:38, while the Jason Tarkong-led Team Last Minute was 11th (2:21:36).

The Finishers (4th, 1:45:48); Hyatt Thrive (5th, 1:48:23); Chasing Booties (6th, 1:54:03); Team Milan (7th, 1:54:37); and Team Vicente (9th, 2:12:13) were the other competing squads.

Meanwhile, Saipan Swim Club Trident topped the youth division, reaching the Last Command Post at 1:45:59 followed closely by the Saipan Community School Tsunamis (1:50:34).

Team SSC Juniors placed third at 2:22.18 after a second SSC team, which would have finished third with its 1:48.09, was disqualified after having only three members.

Six individuals made the solo run with Manny Sitchon and Tiffany Lin emerging as the fastest male and female runners after submitting times of 1:37: 51 and 1:42:15, respectively.

Max Simian (1:42:08), Chang Whang Jang (1:58:31), and Steven Johnson (1:59: 40) were the other male participants, while Yumiko Mizuno (1:52: 56) was the other female runner.

The Top 3 teams in the adult and youth divisions received chocolates and other gift items, while prizes from different sponsors were given away in the raffle.

Members of each team alternated in running one mile each until they completed the 13.7-mile journey to Marpi. The island relay was Northern Marianas Athletics' final event for the year in their continued effort of promoting physical fitness and healthy lifestyle.

LADY

From Page 28

2-1, thanks to Angel Sally's pair of goals. Angel was still at it in the last 20 minutes of the match, adding two more goals, while Lyka Sally and Pinyarat Shankweiller also hit the board in the second half to complete Matansa's rout of Lady Blues. Matansa's other goal in the second frame came from Lady Blues' error.

Meanwhile, two teams won their debut games in the co-ed U12 division last Friday with the Lil Rascals edging Sisig Blue, 5-4 and Team Betde outclassing Orange Rangers.

Mark Esalan powered Lil Rascals to the close win in the first co-ed U12 match after drilling all of his team's goals. He scored the first three in the opening half to help Lil' Rascal match Sisig Blue's output. Rintaro Miyawaki made the twin goals for Sisig Blue in the first half, while Eun Syu Hahn tallied the other one.

In the second half, Sisig Blue failed to contain Esalan, who added a pair to secure the victory for Sisig Blue. Miyawaki got the lone goal for Sisig Blue in the second half.

Thaipi Austria duplicated Esalan's five goals in Team Betde's win over Orange Crushers. Austria was unstoppable in the second half, scoring four goals. He teamed up with John Michael Rojas in giving team Betde a debut win, as the latter added two goals in the first half.

The first half wrapped up with Team Betde holding on to a shaky 3-2 lead, as Orange Crushers remained in contention after getting one goal apiece from Sebastian Manabat and Jaydee Jose. However, the Orange Crushers failed to steal the win in the second half as Merrick Toves' two goals and John Mark Anastacio's one still fell short of matching Austria's four.

Besides the co-ed U12 and girls U15 divisions games, a boys U15 match was also played last Friday, but results of the Orange Crushers-Astig Futsal tiff were unavailable at press time, as well as the three other games scheduled last Saturday.

36

From Page 28

Rivera also notched a PBT in the 100m freestyle event with her 1:17.86, while Aika Watanabe was the other PBT getter in the 11 to 12 age group with her 1:22.12. Three other swimmers in the girls division earned PBTs—9 to 10 and Tsunami Saipan's Nanaka Wanatabe (1:24.54) and Natsuki Nagata (1:44.53) and U8's Kana Suzuki (1:48.05).

In the boys division, three swimmers each in the U8 and 9 to 10 divisions registered PBTs. Xu topped the U8 list with his 1:26.58 and was followed by Isaiah Aleksenko (1:30.04) and Rechucher (1:45.53), while Tenorio (1:19.73), Tomie (1:54.60), and Rentaro Suzuki (1:54.74) made up the 9 to 10 group.

In the older age group, 11 to 12's Batallones (1:15.22) and Yoshino (1:30.79) of Tsunami Saipan and 13 to 14's Christian Villacrusis (1:03.65) of SSC also earned PBT in the 100m freestyle.

In the 200m IM, SSC's Victoria Chentsova posted 2:54.67 for a PBT, while Akira Kadokura (4:10.87), Lennosuke Suzuki (2:56.79), Kento Akimaru (2:39.89) and Villacrusis (2:48.44) had the same feat. In the 50m breaststroke, Tsunami Saipan's Ayumi Obligacion was the lone swimmer to nail a PBT (1:00.37).

2014 NMIFA U12 Interscholastic Football League Girls Finals

PHOTOS BY ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Garapan Elementary School player kicks the ball high during their title game against William S. Reyes Elementary School in the 2014 NMIFA U12 Interscholastic Football League early this month at the Hopwood Junior High School Field.

A William S. Reyes Elementary School player slides while chasing the ball.

A William S. Reyes Elementary School player is left to battle ball possession against three Garapan Elementary School defenders after the latter's teammate falls down.

William S. Reyes Elementary School and Garapan Elementary School players exchange high fives after their title game.

William S. Reyes Elementary School and Garapan Elementary School players fight for the ball.

William S. Reyes Elementary School's goalie steps in for a save.

William S. Reyes Elementary School coach Melissa Dickinson celebrates with one of her players.

A William S. Reyes Elementary School player tries to stop the ball.

A Garapan Elementary School player, center, dribbles in front of a William S. Reyes Elementary School defender.

Romo, Cowboys not backing off vs Redskins

PAGE 24

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Raptors snap Clippers' 8-game win streak

PAGE 25

Team Usagi tops island relay

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Seiya Eda and his four teammates lived up to their squad's name, as Team Usagi bested 10 other groups in last Saturday's 33rd Annual Christmas Island Relay.

Eda along with Beo Ngirchongor, who a few years ago was member of another winning team, and veterans Mamiko Oshima-Berger, Jack Kabiriel and Tony Ichiou formed the fastest squad that made the early morning run up

See TEAM on Page 26

JON PEREZ
Members of Team Usagi, from left, Beo Ngirchongor, Mamiko Oshima-Berger, Jack Kabiriel, Tony Ichiou, and Seiya Eda relax and pose for a photo after crossing the finish line in last Saturday's 33rd Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post in Marpi.

Lady Blues, Matansa Sparks win debuts

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Lady Blues and Matansa Sparks prevailed in the opening games in the girls U15 division of the 2014 SSS Christmas Youth Futsal Tournament.

Lady Blues debuted in the holiday tournament against Girly Flowers & Rainbows last Friday at the TSL Sports Complex and recorded a 5-2 victory, while Matansa faced the former last Saturday and cruised to a 7-1 triumph.

Against Girly Flowers & Rainbows, Lady Blues got its act together in the second half to win in the opening day. Diana Maniacop showed up in the second half and scored a hat-trick, while Katherine Magat added one goal. Negahr Rastguiy drilled Lady Blue's other goal, scoring in the first half to force a deadlock. Mark Kay Alferos tallied both goals for Girly Flowers & Rainbows.

Versus Matansa, Lady Blues failed to take the early lead in the four-team field as it was not in its usual element, making it to the board only once off Rastguiy's goal in the first half.

The first 20 minutes of play ended with Matansa on top,

See LADY on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Lady Blues and Girly Flowers & Rainbows chase the ball during their game in the girls U15 division of the SSS futsal tournament last Friday at the TSL Sports Complex.

36 more PBTs posted in NMISF meet

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Thirty-six more personal best times were made in the 2014-2015 NMISF Mid-Season Meet held early this month at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

The most PBTs were registered in the 50m freestyle event with 16 swimmers from Saipan Swim Club and Tsunami Saipan earning the feat. In the 100m freestyle, 14 got PBTs, five in 200m individual medley, and one in the 50m breaststroke.

In the U8 division, seven tallied PBTs in the 50m freestyle with SSC's Jinie Thompson leading the list in the girls division with her 38.99 seconds. Other PBT getters in the girls U8 were Thompson's teammates Nieves Villagomez (55.16 seconds) and Kaithly Chavez (58.53 seconds) and Tsunami Saipan's Kana Suzuki (44.53 seconds). In the boys division, Han Xu's new PBT is 37.48 seconds, while his fellow Tsunami Saipan swimmer Arman Rechucher also logged a PBT (44.92 seconds). SSC's Mark Rainier Chavez was the third boys U8 swimmer to bag a PBT with his 56.90 seconds.

In the boys 9 to 10 age group, three swimmers, too achieved PBTs with Tsunami Saipan's Juhn Tenorio and Kenta Tomie posting 35.66 and 48.33 seconds, respectively, and SSC's Jonathan Sheu tallying 52.46 seconds.

In the boys 11 to 12 division, Nelson Batallones led the list of swimmers with PBTs with his 34.63 seconds and was joined by fellow Tsunami Saipan bet Jhota Yoshino (40.68 seconds) and Ja Min Elliot (44.23 seconds).

In the girls division, Tsunami Saipan's Asaka Litulumar got a PBT (49.38 seconds) in the 9 to 10 age group and Kyona Rivera (34.85 seconds) and Kathrine Illahi (40.09 seconds) had the same achievement in the 11 to 12 and 13 to 14, respectively.

See 36 on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
A Saipan Swim Club member races in the 50m freestyle event during a local meet last month. SSC and Tsunami Saipan members gained personal best times in the Northern Mariana Islands Swimming Federation-sanctioned meet early this month at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.